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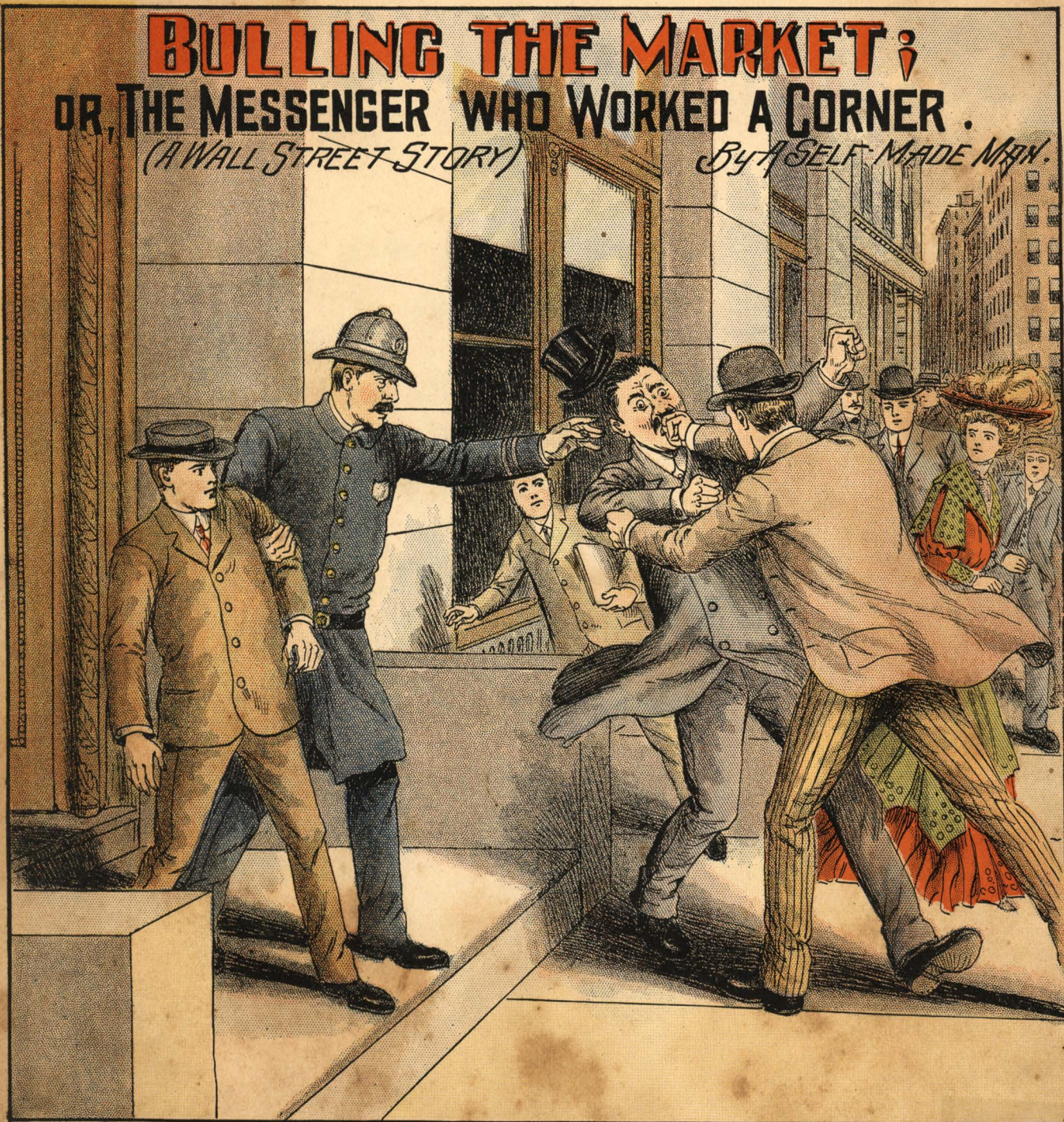
FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

BULLING THE MARKET; OR, THE MESSENGER WHO WORKED A CORNER.

(A WALL STREET STORY)

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



"Aha! You wish to insult me!" cried Dean, shaking his fist in the face of the boy's defender. The young broker knocked his arm aside, sprang at him, and struck him a heavy blow in the mouth, knocking him down.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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Bulling the Market

OR,

The Messenger Who Worked a Corner

(A WALL STREET STORY)

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

MRS. CRIMP'S INVOLUNTARY BATH.

"What's that? You'll talk back to me, miss! Take that, and that, and that!"

Each "that" was punctuated with a blow that wrung a cry of pain from a pretty, fair-haired girl of fifteen named Bessie Kane.

The blows were administered by a stout strap in the sinewy fingers of Mrs. Crimp, the presiding genius of a small tavern or roadhouse at the head of Main Street, Millbank, State of New Jersey.

Mrs. Crimp was a tall, bony, but withal muscular lady of forty or thereabouts.

Nobody could accuse her of a superabundance of good looks.

She had a temper that asserted itself whenever anything happened to displease her, and when she got going she could make things hum.

Although she wasn't the owner of the "Millbank Hotel," as the sign read above the door, she was the ruler of the roost just the same.

Her husband, Obadiah Crimp, a small, mild-tempered man of fifty, was the proprietor of the establishment; a fact duly set forth on the sign, but he was a mere cipher about the place.

Mr. Crimp had long since ceased to assert his independence, either as a man or as head of the house.

Whatever his wife said went with him, and the curiously matched pair got along pretty well in consequence.

The domestic tragedy with which this chapter opens, and

which was merely a repetition of a long series of similar scenes, started at the kitchen door overlooking the back yard.

Mrs. Crimp, seizing the girl by the arm, proceeded to lay the strap about her unprotected shoulders with an energy that might have been expended in a better cause.

Bessie, screaming with pain, broke away from her mistress and ran around the house toward the street.

Mrs. Crimp, not satisfied with the amount of punishment she had inflicted, gave chase with knit lips and corrugated brow.

And she could run some, too, in spite of her long skirts.

Bessie flew around the corner of the hotel like a frightened fawn.

She spied a good-looking, stalwart boy of sixteen standing by the horse-trough on the edge of the walk.

He had heard the girl's cries, and there was a frown on his face, while his two fists were clenched aggressively.

He knew well enough what the screams meant.

He had heard them often enough before under similar circumstances, and had received many a backhanded clout from Mrs. Crimp for trying to defend the girl.

Will Wicker had said more than once that he didn't see much difference between Mrs. Crimp's bony hand and the business end of a club.

They both seemed to be equally hard and effective at short range.

"Will, Will, save me! Save me!" cried Bessie, rushing up and falling at his feet in abject terror.

The boy responded to her appeal at once by stepping between her and the irate lady of the hotel.

"Stand out of my way, Will Wicker!" cried Mrs. Crimp, grabbing him by the arm with one hand while she reached for Bessie with the other.

"No, ma'am; I think you've gone far enough," replied Will in a dogged way.

"Stand out of my way or I'll give you a dose of the same medicine. You ought to know me well enough by this time."

"Yes, ma'am, I know you pretty well. I know you punish Bessie altogether too much. She's a good girl and does not deserve it."

"How dare you attempt to teach me what I ought or ought not to do? Mr. Crimp is altogether too easy with you, as I've told him a hundred times, and you are gettin' sassy and independent. It's about time you learned your place if you're goin' to remain 'round this hotel."

She half swung Will aside, and raising the strap aimed a blow at the shrinking girl.

Will caught her arm as it descended and the enraged woman struck him a ringing blow in the face with the leathery palm of the other hand.

The blow hurt the boy and aroused all his slumbering resentment against the boss of the Millbank Hotel.

He grabbed the strap and tore it from her grasp.

"You sha'n't strike Bessie again, do you understand? You sha'n't strike her, I tell you! I've stood this business long enough. You beat Bessie on the slightest provocation, until sometimes her back and shoulders are covered with bruises. Well, you won't do it any more if I know it. If you dare lay your finger on her after this I'll make you sweat for it if I go to jail."

"You young villain!" screamed the virago. "My husband shall horsewhip you within an inch of your life. If he doesn't do it I'll do it myself. The idea of you talkin' that way to me, you little viper! Hain't Mr. Crimp and me brought you up from nothin', and this is the way you turn on us, you ungrateful little villain! Hand me back that strap this instant! Do you hear?"

"I hear, but you won't get it, just the same," replied Will firmly.

In a moment Will and Mrs. Crimp were mixed up in a scrap, the angered woman pounding him with her fists, and the boy doing the best he could to escape the blows by grabbing her wrists and holding on to them.

Bessie looked on with frightened eyes.

Mrs. Crimp's dander was up and she was determined to conquer the boy who had been something of a thorn in her side for a year or more.

Will, now that matters were come to an issue, was equally resolved to make the lady of the house understand that he, at least, was not to be banged around with impunity any more.

At this moment Mr. Crimp appeared at the door and looked on also in a helpless kind of way.

He never thought of interfering in his wife's behalf, as he considered she was abundantly able to take care of herself, as indeed she was.

Besides, he thought a whole lot of Will, whom he looked upon as a son, and he sympathized with the boy in his trouble.

Had he dared butt in it would have been in Will's favor.

He didn't need to inquire into the cause of the rumpus. He knew it was on account of Bessie Kane.

He had heard the girl's cries, and had easily guessed that his wife was giving her another beating for some cause known best to herself.

The scrap, however, came to a sudden termination in an unexpected manner.

Will accidentally tripped Mrs. Crimp and the lady, losing her balance, fell over into the horse-trough with a splash that sent the water into the air.

She uttered a shrill scream as her head went under, and her mouth being open she swallowed more water than she was accustomed to take in at one time.

She wallowed about for a moment or two, and then Will, staggered by the accident, hastened to assist her out of the trough.

Her involuntary bath had taken some of the fight out of her.

In fact, she was a bit frightened, and thought Will had made a deliberate attempt to drown her.

She backed away from his extended hand, and as she was in the act of stepping out of the trough she saw old man Seth Peaseley, a neighboring farmer, and his son, Nat, driving up to the hotel.

That was enough for her.

She sprang from the trough, rushed up on the veranda and disappeared into the house, leaving a watery trail behind her.

CHAPTER II.

A MISHAP IN THE SWAMP.

"Hello, Will!" ejaculated Nat Peaseley, springing from the light farm wagon as his father reined up at the water-trough. "Been havin' a scrap with the old woman?"

"Looked kind of like it, didn't it?" replied Will.

"By gum! It did that. Did you dump her into the water?"

"No. She tripped over my leg and fell in herself."

"B'gosh!" grinned Nat. "She got a bath, all right. What was she doin' to you? Tryin' to lick you with that strap?"

The speaker pointed to the strap that Mrs. Crimp had used on Bessie.

"She was trying to use that on Bessie when I interfered, and then she got mad and attempted to hand me out a dose of the same medicine."

"And then she fell into the water?"

"That's about the size of it."

"I reckon Mrs. Crimp is a Tartar. You wouldn't catch me stayin' here and puttin' up with her. Not by a jugful," and Nat shook his head in a very decided way.

"What would you do?"

"I'd run away, b'gosh!"

"Where would you go?"

"I'd go to York, git a job in Wall Street and make my fortin."

"I'd like to go there myself. I believe I'd do it if it wasn't for Bessie."

"I reckon no gal would stop me from goin' if I made up my mind to."

"If you had a step-mother who abused your sisters Sukey

and Moll, and your father was afraid to interfere in their behalf, I guess you'd think twice about going away and leaving them without a real protector," replied Will.

"Oh, my sisters kin take keer of themselves. I'd like to see any step-mam sit on their necks. By gum! There'd be somethin' doin' in the house," chuckled Nat.

"But if your sisters were younger, and couldn't stand up for themselves any better than Bessie can, you'd——"

"I'd stand up for them, bet your life; but Bessie hain't your sister."

"I like her just as much as if she was," replied Will.

"I reckon you like her better than a sister; ain't that it?" grinned Nat.

Will flushed and made no answer.

"Say, Will," went on Nat. "I come over to go shootin' with you this afternoon. You kin go down to the inlet with me, can't you?"

"I guess I can do that. Where's your gun?"

"In the waggin."

"Get it out, then, and I'll go and fetch mine."

Will walked around to the kitchen where Bessie had already preceded him.

He found the girl at work at her interrupted task.

She was sobbing to herself, for she didn't know what else would happen to her as soon as Mrs. Crimp had put on dry clothes.

Will put his arm around her in a protecting way.

"Don't cry, Bessie. I'm not going to let Mrs. Crimp beat you any more," he said soothingly.

The girl buried her face on his shoulder and began to cry afresh.

"Come, now, Bessie, brace up. The trouble is all over."

"She'll be-beat me again when she comes downstairs."

"Not on your life, she won't. I won't let her."

"She'll do it when you aren't around."

"If she lays a hand on you when I'm away I want you to tell me, and I'll read her the riot act in a way she won't forget."

Will then went on up to his room, got his shotgun, and rejoined Nat outside.

Nat's father, after a short talk with Mr. Crimp, had driven away down the street, and the landlord of the Millbank Hotel had gone back into the public room.

"Ready to start?" asked Nat.

Will nodded, and the two boys, throwing their guns across their shoulders, walked off toward the inlet, less than a mile away.

Will and Nat were something like chums.

Whenever circumstances permitted they went off and enjoyed themselves together—usually gunning or fishing, according to the season of the year.

Nat helped his father in the fields and did chores for his mother around the house; while Will was boy of all work at the hotel.

On their way to the inlet the chief topic of their conversation was the opportunities they believed they saw in Wall Street to get ahead in the world and make their fortunes.

Their attention had been first attracted to the financial world by the presence in that neighborhood the preceding fall of three stock brokers who had come down to Millbank for a week's shooting.

The gentlemen put up at the hotel, and hired Will to show them where the best shooting was to be found.

Nat, happening to turn up with his gun on one of the days he was included in the party, and participated in two subsequent expeditions to the inlet.

The traders took quite a fancy to Will, and they also cottoned somewhat to Nat on account of his quaint ways and conversation.

During the trips the boys were greatly interested in the Wall Street talk that the brokers occasionally indulged in.

Their curiosity being aroused, they asked a good many questions about the financial district, all of which the traders answered with great good nature.

One of the brokers, amused at Nat's simplicity, gave him a somewhat exaggerated idea of how things were conducted in the Street, so that young Peaseley got the notion in his head that the brokers were not only the jolliest crowd of men in the world, but that they made money so easily that it was just like finding it.

Ever since the departure of the brokers Will and Nat scarcely ever met that they didn't have something to say about Wall Street.

If there hadn't been sundry obstacles in their path it is not improbable that the two boys would have taken French leave of Millbank and made their way to New York in the fond hope of getting jobs in Wall Street.

Nat had even gone so far as to propose the matter to his father, but old man Peaseley wouldn't listen to the suggestion for a moment.

As for Will, various reasons deterred him from leaving the village.

First of all he had no money to speak of, nor chances of making any.

Secondly, Mr. and Mrs. Crimp, who had raised him from a homeless little orphan of six years, would not listen, he was sure, to his leaving them, as he was very useful as an all-around helper at the hotel.

And thirdly, probably the most important reason why he hesitated about leaving Millbank was on account of Bessie Kane.

He took more interest in Bessie than anybody else in the world, because the girl was an orphan like himself, and because she was knocked about and abused by Mrs. Crimp from morning till night.

She would have had twice as hard a time of it but that most of the time he was on hand to rescue her from a part of her punishment, receiving the excess on his own broad shoulders, for which he cared not a rap, since it relieved the girl of much that would otherwise have come to her.

Bessie loved him like a sister, and Will assured her that some day when he got the chance to make his own living away from the Crimps he would take her with him and provide for her until she could do something for herself.

Thus his glowing anticipations of making a start in Wall Street gradually faded away until they were revived by an incident which happened on the afternoon our story opens.

When the boys reached the inlet they made their way to a certain spot where an old dugout was moored.

This flatboat belonged to nobody and the boys were accustomed to appropriate it to their own use whenever they wanted it.

Putting their guns in the forward part of the craft they

took hold of a couple of short oars and began to paddle the boat up into the marsh.

Inside of half an hour they were up where the birds were numerous, and then they got busy with their guns, seldom missing a fair shot.

It wasn't long before they heard the report of shotguns along the edge of the marsh, where a branch of the inlet ran into the ocean.

"I wonder who's shootin' yonder?" said Nat.

"Give it up," replied Will. "Maybe the two assistants at the lighthouse are out gunning after something for supper."

"Let's work over that way and see who it is, anyway," answered Nat, whose bump of curiosity regarding the identity of the other sportsmen was aroused.

Will had no objection, so they dropped their guns and took to their oars again.

"We want to look out that we don't get a charge of shot into us," said Will at length, as the report of a shotgun sounded quite near.

"By gum! That's right," replied Nat. "I hain't hankerin' to be took for no marshbird."

"You'd make a healthy-looking bird," laughed Will.

"I reckon I would, b'gosh!"

At that moment the boys heard exclamations of excitement a short distance away.

"Hello!" ejaculated Will. "I wonder what's going on now."

Then loud shouts for help were borne to their ears.

"The shooters seem to be in trouble," cried Will. "Get a move on your oar."

They began paddling away as hard as they could, and presently the dugout shot out on to the edge of the marsh. Then they had a view of what had happened.

A boat with a gentleman in full hunting attire was hard and fast on a rock in the center of the stream running toward the ocean.

The gentleman's companion had fallen overboard and was being borne away by the current.

He seemed utterly unable to help himself, and the man in the boat could not aid him without plunging into the water and swimming out to him, and he made no attempt to do this.

CHAPTER III.

WILL GETS AN OFFER OF A JOB IN WALL STREET.

"Strangers!" exclaimed Nat, in some surprise.

"Never mind who they are, we must save that man in the stream. He doesn't seem able to swim, and is in a fair way of going out to sea."

"Help! Help!" shouted the gentleman in the boat, which was fast filling with water and sinking under him.

Will saw that the man in the boat was in no little danger himself.

"You'd better row over and take him off, Nat," he said.

"I'll jump in the creek and swim after the other chap."

Suiting the action to the word, Will threw down the oar, flung off his jacket and plunged into the water.

He was a fine swimmer and, though somewhat impeded by his garments, he soon came up with the sinking man who had already been under twice, and was now so limp

and exhausted that he made but a faint struggle when the boy caught him from behind and raised his head above the stream.

Will swam with him toward the nearest bank of the creek, which was but a few yards away, and soon had him lying high and dry on his face so that any water he might have swallowed could run out of his mouth.

Looking back, he saw that Nat had taken the other man off and was rowing toward the spot where he and the man whose life he had saved had landed.

By the time the forward end of the dugout touched the shore the half-drowned man showed signs of reviving.

In a few minutes with such assistance as Will rendered him he was able to sit up and make a feeble effort to thank his preserver.

"Help me get him into the boat, Nat. We'll take him over to the lighthouse," said Will.

The lighthouse was built on the point of a long, sandy tongue of land which formed the seaward side of the inlet.

It consisted of a tall white shaft with a lantern at the apex which showed a steady white light at night.

The keeper and his two assistants lived in a small house built on spiles at the edge of the inlet a hundred feet from the lighthouse, and the two were connected by a stout plank bridge provided with a railing.

At the end of the house, and projecting over the inlet, was a pair of falls from which a rowboat was suspended.

It was toward this point that the boys directed the dugout.

On their approach one of the lighthouse assistants came out of the house, walked around a wooden gallery that encircled the house on three sides, and leaning on the railing gazed at the oncoming boat.

When the dugout reached the spiles Will stood up and told the man what had happened to their two passengers, and asked that the gentleman he had rescued from the water of the creek be taken into the house and attended to.

"Beach your boat and we'll come down and look after the gentleman," said the lighthouse keeper.

Will and Nat beached their boat and the two assistant keepers came down and carried the gentleman up to the house, his companion following.

The man who had been in the water was assisted to disrobe and after being well rubbed down was provided with an old suit for temporary use.

A good dose of brandy was given him and then he said that he was feeling much better.

"Where is the boy who saved my life?" he asked.

His companion told him that the lad was taking off his wet clothes in the next room.

"Tell him that I want to see him when he's ready."

So Will was sent for and presently came up into the living-room of the building.

"My boy, I am under the deepest obligation to you," the gentleman said, grasping Will by the hand.

"You're welcome, sir. I couldn't do otherwise than try to save you when I saw you drifting out to sea."

"What is your name, and where do you live?"

"My name is Will Wicker, and I live at the Millbank Hotel, at the village of that name about a mile from here."

"Indeed! My companion and I were going there after we finished our shooting. Mr. Obadiah Crimp is the proprietor, I believe."

"Yes, sir."

"We were recommended to the house by some friends who were down here shooting last fall."

"Do you mean Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Green, and three other New York brokers?"

"That's exactly who I mean. My companion, Mr. Douglas and myself, are members of the New York Stock Exchange. My name is Edwin Arden. I sha'n't forget what I owe you, my lad, for saving my life. I shall make it all right with you."

"Then you and this gentleman are brokers, too?" said Will eagerly.

"We are."

"I s'pose you came down for a week's shooting like the other gentlemen?" said the boy.

"We intended to remain about four days in this vicinity, but I'm afraid this accident we met with will put the kibosh on our trip. We've lost our guns and all our other paraphernalia."

"Nat and me will loan you and your friend our guns, and I guess we can scare up a couple of game bags for you. Our guns aren't the best make, but they shoot all right, sir," said Will.

"Thank you for your offer, my lad. We will consider it and let you know. What sort of place is Millbank?"

"Pretty small, sir, but it's old."

"Old! How old is it?" asked Broker Arden curiously.

"Couldn't tell you. It is older than the Revolutionary War."

"That's pretty old, I must admit. It ought to have grown considerably since that time."

"I've heard Mr. Crimp say that it isn't more than half again as big as it was a hundred years ago."

"Why doesn't it grow like other places?"

"I can't answer that question. Seems to be about the same size it was when I came here about ten years ago."

"How old are you now?"

"Sixteen."

"Expect to live here always?"

"I hope not, sir."

"I suppose you'd like to go to the city like the majority of country boys."

"Yes, sir. I'd like to go to Wall Street and get a start in life."

"Wall Street, eh?" ejaculated Mr. Arden. "What put that idea into your head?"

"I think Wall Street is the place for a boy to get ahead in."

"It is, if he's the right kind of boy."

"What do you mean by the right kind, sir?"

"Well, he must be bright, ambitious and energetic. Willing to begin at the foot of the ladder and work his way up."

"I wish I had the chance to do that," said Will.

"Do you really mean that?"

"I do," replied Will earnestly.

"Would your people let you go to the city?"

"I haven't any people, sir. I'm an orphan. I live with Mr. and Mrs. Crimp at the hotel, and work for them for my keep. I think I'm getting too old for that now. I'd like to get out into the world and make money. I know I could do it if I had a fair show."

Broker Arden looked at Will critically for a moment and then, turning to his companion, said:

"Your messenger is about to leave you soon. Why not give this boy a chance in your office? I would if I had an opening, but unfortunately I haven't. I owe the lad a debt of gratitude which I'd be glad to repay in some way. Therefore, as a favor to me, Douglas, I'd like you to take him into your office and teach him the business."

"I'll do it to oblige you, Arden, if he can come. My messenger could break him in during the next two weeks."

"He looks smart enough to learn the ropes in a fortnight," said Arden. "Do you think you could arrange to go to the city by next Monday, Wicker?"

"I'm not sure, but I'll speak to Mr. Crimp about it right away."

"Do so. At any rate, you could manage to get to New York some time during the week. Of course, the earlier you go there the better. You will need at last a week to get acquainted with the office buildings, the general lay-out of the district, and the run of your duties. This is an exceptional chance for you, as you will be under the wing of an experienced office boy who knows Wall Street like a book, and he will put you wise to everything in your line of duty. If you came to Wall Street under ordinary circumstances looking for a position you'd stand a very poor show. No broker could afford to hire a boy who was completely ignorant of the city, especially of the financial district and all its ins and outs."

"Here is my business card, Wicker," said Broker Douglas, handing Will a bit of printed pasteboard. "That will direct you to my office. I will talk to you more fully when we reach the hotel."

"Thank you, sir," replied the boy, putting the card in his pocket.

An hour later Will's and the broker's clothes were sufficiently dried for them to put them on, and then the gentlemen, after handing the lighthouse men a \$5 bill to recompense them for their trouble, started across the inlet in the dugout with Will and Nat.

Landing on the main shore, the brokers and the boys started for the Millbank Hotel, where the visitors intended putting up for the night at least.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROKERS AT THE MILLBANK HOTEL.

It was coming on dark when Will, Nat and the two brokers reached the Millbank Hotel.

Mr. Crimp, old man Peaseley and several other of the ancient inhabitants of the village were gathered on the veranda, swapping political and other information, and smoking home-made corn-cob pipes that had done service so long they were strong enough to pull a wagonload of stone.

The appearance of the two gentlemanly strangers in company with the boys excited the curiosity and interest of the veranda loungers.

"Pop," said Will, addressing Mr. Crimp by a title he was in the habit of using when speaking to the man who had brought him up from a little boy, "here are two gentlemen who wish to put up at the hotel for the night. They met with an accident this afternoon while shooting in the inlet and lost their grips, guns and other property in the water. I guess it isn't too late for Mrs. Crimp to prepare supper

for them. Here are some birds Nat and I shot. These gentlemen would like to have them cooked in preference to anything else."

"Step right in, gentlemen," said Mr. Crimp in a hospitable tone. "I can furnish you with a first-class meal and good beds. Mrs. Crimp is the best cook in the county, and I'll guarantee that she'll broil those birds in a way that'll make your mouth water. Come right in and register."

The brokers followed the landlord into the public room while Will and Nat started for the kitchen to wash up.

Old man Peaseley called Will back.

"Who be them fellers, Will?" he asked. "They look like city folks."

"You've hit it, all right, Mr. Peaseley. They're Wall Street brokers."

"Well, I'll be durned! Wall Street brokers, eh?" replied the farmer, scratching his long, straggling chin whiskers and gazing into the public room at the city men who were inscribing their names in the account book that did duty for a hotel register. "I s'pose they're worth a powerful lot of money?"

"Yes, I believe they own a bank or two," grinned Will.

"B'gosh! You don't say!" exclaimed Mr. Peaseley, regarding the visitors with fresh interest. "Nat wants to go to York mighty bad. If I thought he'd git to own a bank I might be injuced to let him go."

Will hurried away and found Mrs. Crimp and Bessie cleaning up the kitchen.

"So you've got home at last?" said Mrs. Crimp aggressively. "I had a good mind to let you go to bed without your supper, only Bessie begged me to let her keep it in the oven for you. You kin take it now and eat it on the stoop. I won't have you mussin' the kitchen up at this hour."

"All right," replied Will. "I don't mind where I eat it; but you'll have to muss the kitchen up a little bit, anyway. You've got a couple of visitors who want supper."

"What!" roared the lady. "A couple of visitors! I reckon no visitors get anythin' to eat here to-night."

"That so?" replied Will. "What are you keeping a hotel for, then?"

"Are they strangers who've come to put up here?" she asked with a change of tone.

"That's what they are. Two brokers from New York."

"That's different," replied Mrs. Crimp. "When did they come?"

"Just now. They're registering in the public room. Pop will be in to notify you to get supper for them under way. They want these birds cooked."

"Then they've been shootin' down this way?"

"Yes; but they met with hard luck."

"How is that?"

Will briefly told her about the misadventure the brokers had met with in the inlet, and how he had saved the life of one of them.

Bessie regarded Will with great admiration.

Mrs. Crimp made no remark, but taking the birds from Will called the girl and set her to work plucking the game.

She then ordered the boy to get wood and start the fire in the stove afresh, and to fetch a tin of water from the well, which Will proceeded to do.

Nat met Will in the yard and said he was going home with the old man.

In the meanwhile Mr. Crimp took his two guests to rooms on the second floor, where they tidied themselves up and then rejoined the landlord in the public room, where they entered into a general conversation with him.

Will ate his belated supper at the kitchen table instead of on the stoop, and then helped Bessie set one of the small tables in the dining-room.

In the course of an hour the hungry brokers caught a whiff of broiled birds as Bessie opened the dining-room door and announced that supper was ready.

They lost no time following Mr. Crimp into the eating-room, where they found an appetizing repast, to which they did full justice, and both declared they had never eaten birds more deliciously cooked.

After the meal they adjourned to the veranda in front of the house, which had some time since been vacated by the villagers, to enjoy a couple of the best cigars that Mr. Crimp had in stock.

The landlord talked with them awhile, and when he had to attend to some business inside Will took his place, and had quite a talk about Wall Street with the brokers.

They gave him a general idea of the work that would be expected of him if he came to New York and entered Mr. Douglas's office as errand boy.

He assured Mr. Douglas that there was little doubt that he would be on hand the following week.

"Mr. and Mrs. Crimp have no real claim on me. I have paid them back with my services for all they have ever done for me," said Will. "If it wasn't for Bessie Kane, who is an orphan like myself, and who Mrs. Crimp is constantly abusing, I wouldn't hesitate a moment about leaving the village. Mr. Crimp is all right. I'm going to have a talk with him about Bessie. If he agrees to stand up for the girl in my place you may expect to see me next Monday, Mr. Douglas."

"All right, my lad," replied the gentleman.

The brokers, having finished their cigars, decided that they felt tired enough to go to bed, and accordingly they walked up to their rooms.

Next morning they announced to Mr. Crimp that they would take the early afternoon local for Jersey City, as, under the circumstances, their hunting trip had proved a failure.

They promised to come down later on and spend a week at the hotel, for they understood that there was good fishing in the inlet during the season.

The landlord, who was eager to secure their custom again, assured them that there was the finest fishing on the coast in the neighborhood of Millbank.

Will harnessed up the horse and drove them to the station.

As the train came in sight Mr. Arden handed Will a \$20 bill to pay his way to the city, and defray any other necessary expense.

"I shall always remember you with gratitude, my boy," he said, shaking Will warmly by the hand. "If circumstances should prevent you coming to New York right away write and let me know. Remember one thing, my lad, you can always count on me as a friend who is inter-

ested in your welfare, and you may rely on me to do anything in my power to help you along in the world."

"Thank you, sir," replied Will gratefully.

The brokers then stepped aboard the train, which pulled out for Jersey City, and the boy returned with a thoughtful look to the hotel.

CHAPTER V.

WILL LEAVES MILLBANK FOR WALL STREET.

"What are you thinkin' about, Will?" asked Mr. Crimp that evening on the veranda. "You've been lookin' mighty solemn all afternoon."

"I've been thinking about leaving the village and going to New York," replied the boy.

The landlord of the Millbank Hotel looked at him in astonishment.

"Why, you're too young to go cavortin' around a big city like York," he replied. "You'd be done up in no time at all. Besides, I couldn't spare you. Neither could the missus."

"I'm sixteen," answered Will sturdily, "and it's time I was thinking about getting ahead in the world."

"Gettin' ahead in the world! You can get ahead here, can't you?"

"No, I can't. There's nothing doing in this sleepy old place. Why, Millbank hasn't grown anything to speak of since the time of the Revolution, when it had nearly as many houses as it has now."

"I've lived here nigh onto forty year, and I make a livin' right along."

"That's about all you do make. What's a living? I'm ambitious to do something better than that."

"I s'pose you think, like all boys, that you could make your fortune right off if you went up to the city?" said Mr. Crimp with a satirical smile.

"No, sir; I expect it would take time. I'd commence at the foot of the ladder and work my way up."

"I'm afraid listenin' to them brokers has made you discontented."

"I won't say it hasn't, though I always did intend to go to New York when I got old enough."

"You won't be old enough for ten year yet."

"Why, I'll be a man before ten years."

"You need to be one to take the risk of goin' to York."

"I don't see that there's any danger for a boy like me. I know how to take care of myself."

"You can take care of yourself down here because you've grown up in the place. You know everybody 'round about, and the whole country for miles. Why shouldn't you be able to look after yourself? You'd find it different if you went to the city. You'd get lost among the streets right away, and while you was wanderin' around some of them bad men I've read about in the Bowery and on the East Side might get hold of you, rob you of what little money you had in your clothes, knock you on the head so as to keep you from tellin' the police about it, and toss you into one of the rivers. You don't know how well off you are down here where nothin' wuss than a tramp now and then comes 'round to bother us."

Mr. Crimp delivered the foregoing bit of advice with the air of a man perfectly convinced that he knew what he was

talking about, although he had only been to New York half a dozen times in the whole course of his life.

Will, however, was not particularly impressed by his logic, although he was willing to admit the correctness of it in a general way.

He knew that some parts of New York were pretty tough; but he intended to be very careful of himself when he got there.

"Mr. Douglas said he'd give me a job as messenger in his office if I came up to the city next week," said Will doggedly.

"What's that?" replied Mr. Crimp, pricking up his ears.

"One of them brokers said he'd give you a job?"

"He did."

"He ain't got no right to entice you to New York. I need you down here. Me and Mrs. Crimp raised you from a small boy and we've a right to your services till you've grown up."

"You've been having my services right along, haven't you?"

"It ain't more than we're entitled to. We allowed you to go to the district school regularly, and we've fed and clothed you. It would be the height of ingratitude for you to leave us in a hole now you've got to be a big boy and of some use around the hotel."

"You could hire another boy cheap. There's Dave Tarbox, he's looking for a job. He is able to do everything I'm doing. He isn't ambitious like me. He'll be satisfied to stay around this neighborhood till he's baldheaded."

"Look here, Will, are you really bent on goin' to York?"

"I am, and what's more, I'm going there. I'd prefer to go with your permission, for you've treated me first-rate, a good deal better than the missus; but if you won't let me go willingly I'm going anyway. I've got the chance of my life now to go to work in Wall Street. Mr. Douglas's boy is going to leave in two weeks, and he told me if I came up the fore part of next week his present boy will break me into the job. That's an opportunity that doesn't happen more than once in a while. If I don't take advantage of it it may never come my way again."

Mr. Crimp looked rather sorrowfully at the boy.

"I don't like to have you go away, Will," he said in a troubled tone. "I like you as much as if you was my own son. Dave Tarbox couldn't fill your place nohow with me, whether he did the work all right or not. Then the missus would make things unpleasant if I let you go. If I had a hundred dollars I'd rather lose it than I would you."

Mr. Crimp spoke earnestly, and his words were not without effect on Will.

The boy had a warm corner in his heart for the man he looked upon as his foster father.

The landlord of the Millbank Hotel had never treated him harshly once while he had been living under his roof, and Will appreciated his kindness.

If he could have felt the same toward Mrs. Crimp his resolution to go to New York might have been seriously shaken.

But there was no bond of sympathy between the mistress of the house and himself.

In fact, the reverse was the case.

Will counted on making enough money in Wall Street to

bring Bessie Kane to the city and support her while she was looking around for a suitable situation.

He was tired and sick of seeing her hounded by Mrs. Crimp, and the best he could do at present was to partially protect her, and catch the dickens for doing it.

He was grateful to Mr. Crimp, and he intended to make it all right with him some day when Fortune had smiled on him.

"I'll admit I'm sorry to leave you and Bessie," said Will soberly; "but I've got to do it some time if I ever intend to amount to anything, so I might as well do it now when everything is in my favor. I shall write to you regularly and let you know how I'm getting on. I know you'll be glad to hear that I'm doing well."

Mr. Crimp shook his head deprecatingly.

He saw that the boy had thoroughly made up his mind to go and he felt down in the mouth about it.

"I don't know what the missus will say," he said doubtfully.

"Don't you worry about what she'll say."

"She'll tear things up generally. I know her."

"She can't blame you."

"She'll probably try to beat you."

"I won't be here for her to try it on."

"Don't you mean to tell her?"

"Not a word. I want you to stand up for Bessie after I'm gone. If you don't she may run away, too, for she's frightened to death of Mrs. Crimp."

"I'll do what I can," replied Mr. Crimp without much enthusiasm in his tones, for he realized that his influence with his wife amounted to little.

"All right. I'll rely on you to take her part until—until she'll be able to look out for herself."

"How are you goin' to the city? You'll have to walk, for you hain't got no money that I know of."

"I've got nearly \$30. Mr. Arden gave me \$20 when he left."

"When are you going?"

"I'm going to take the early local to Jersey City on Monday morning."

On Sunday afternoon Will told Bessie that he was going to New York in the morning to make a start in life, and that they might be separated for some time.

Bessie burst into tears and begged him not to leave her.

"I've got to go," replied Will; "but I'm going to send for you just as soon as I get money enough together to keep you in the city till you can get something to do so that you can pay your own way."

It was some time before Bessie could be comforted, and even then she would break out crying again every few minutes and sob on his shoulder.

"You want to be a brave little girl," he said. "I'll write to you every week and you must answer the letters. I'll send you stamps so that you can mail them."

Bessie cried herself to sleep that night.

Next morning after breakfast she accompanied Will part of the way down the road toward the station, as far as a certain hollow tree where he had taken the precaution to carry his valise the night before when Mrs. Crimp was visiting a neighbor.

There they parted, and Bessie returned, a very sad-faced girl, to the hotel.

Mrs. Crimp missed the boy after a while and asked her husband if he had sent him anywhere.

Mr. Crimp said he had not.

"I'd like to know where he's gone gaddin' to this mornin'," she said angrily. "He hasn't attended to his mornin' chores yet. I reckon he and I'll have a settlement when he turns up," she concluded significantly.

Will, of course, didn't turn up, for he was on his way by the early local for Jersey City.

Mrs. Crimp fumed around till ten o'clock and then ordered her husband to go out and hunt him up.

While he was away she went to her next neighbor and borrowed a stout horsewhip, which she placed on a convenient shelf in readiness against the boy's return.

About this time one of the village boys Will had met near the station came to the hotel and asked for Mrs. Crimp.

"What do you want, Tom Cooper?" she snapped, coming to the kitchen door.

"Will Wicker told me to bring you this note," he said, handing it to her and then hurrying off as fast as he could.

The lady didn't pay attention to his departure, so surprised was she at receiving a written communication from Will.

Sure that something was wrong, she tore it open and read the enclosure, which was brief and to the point.

"DEAR MRS. CRIMP—I have left Millbank to take a position in a broker's office in Wall Street, New York. I hope you won't miss me.

Yours sincerely

"WILL WICKER."

Mrs. Crimp uttered a scream of rage, and for the rest of that day there was the mischief to pay in the Millbank Hotel.

CHAPTER VI.

WILL'S INTRODUCTION TO WALL STREET.

Will reached Jersey City in due time and inquired his way from the station platform to the Cortlandt Street ferry slip, as he had been directed to do by Mr. Douglas, for otherwise, in his ignorance, he might have boarded the Desbrosses Street boat or the Brooklyn Annex, either of which would have taken him considerably out of his way.

He landed on the New York side of the river with the crowd, which was a big one, as it was swelled by half of the passengers who had just come in from the west on a fast express.

Will gazed around him in wonder, for it was his first experience out in the big world.

Most of his life had been passed in the ancient village of Millbank, which was an uncommonly quiet spot, where nothing of any moment ever happened.

The largest place he had ever been in was the neighboring town of Edgefield.

Now he found himself transported, as if by some fairy process, to the greatest metropolis of America, with its millions of busy inhabitants, its uproar, excitement and other thrilling features.

Stepping out of the ferry house with the crowd, he stopped and gazed open-mouthed at the particularly wide

and busy thoroughfare known as West Street, thronged with laden trucks and vehicles of every kind, for the freight piers of the big steamship and railroad lines back on the water side of that street.

"My gracious!" he gasped. "New York is truly the greatest place in the world."

He asked a man where Cortlandt Street was.

"Right in front of you. Cross over and you'll be in it," was the terse reply.

Crossing West Street, in some fear of being run down by one of the numerous drays, he walked up Cortlandt Street to its junction with Broadway.

As soon as he was sure that he was on Broadway he followed Mr. Douglas's directions and turned to his right, walking down toward the Battery till he reached Trinity Church with its graveyard.

Wall Street faced the church on the opposite side of the way.

Down Wall Street he walked till he came to a tall office building bearing the number on Mr. Douglas's card.

Then he was all at sea, for never had he dreamed that the office buildings he had read about in the papers were such mammoth structures.

He gazed at the building in wonder and awe, and at the stream of men and boys, passing in and out through the main entrance, like a colony of ants.

"Dern my pichter, if this hain't Josh Whitcomb come to taown," mimicked a broker's messenger, coming up and grabbing Will by the hand, which he proceeded to shake pump-handle fashion. "How aire you, Josh? I'm right glad to see yeou."

Will looked at the boy in astonishment.

"Excuse me," he said. "I guess you've made a mistake. My name isn't Josh Whitcomb. It's Will Wicker."

"Why, hain't you from Charcoal Hollow, New Hampshire?"

"No. I'm from Millbank, New Jersey."

"Come to taown to see the sights?" grinned the messenger.

"No, I've come to Wall Street to go to work."

"What! You going to work in Wall Street?"

Will nodded pleasantly.

"As what? President of a new trust company?"

"No. As messenger for Archibald Douglas, stock broker."

"For who?" fairly gasped the other boy.

"Archibald Douglas. Here's his card. Will you kindly tell me how I shall find his office? It must be in this building, for that's the number on the door."

"Why, I'm Douglas's messenger at present," said the other. "Are you the boy who is going to take my place after I've broken you in?"

"Yes, if your name's Arte Latham."

"That's my name, all right. Shake. So your name is Will Wicker? I'm glad to know you. Sorry I started in to guy you, but you looked like a countryman with that big valise, and you were looking around as if you'd never been in New York before."

"I never was in New York before, or any other place a millionth part as big," admitted Will, who had taken an instant liking to Latham.

"Well, I can't stand here talking to you, as I've an im-

portant message to deliver. Just walk into one of those elevators and tell the man to let you off at the third floor. Then walk down the corridor till you come to Room 54. You'll see Mr. Douglas's name on the glass pane of the door. Walk in and sit down. I'll be back inside of fifteen minutes. No use asking for the boss. He's over at the Exchange."

Will thanked him, followed directions and was presently seated in the waiting-room of Mr. Douglas's office, in company with a dozen customers who were congregated around a noisy kind of brass instrument inclosed in a glass box perched upon a pedestal, and commonly called a "ticker."

On one side of the room was a closed door opening into Mr. Douglas's private office, while on the other was the brass wire fence which separated the counting-room from the space allotted to callers.

A window in the room opened into a wide court and admitted light and air.

Similar windows opened off the counting-room into the same court.

Will counted six clerks busy at tall desks, and he caught a glimpse of the scarlet bow which decorated the hair of the stenographer in a far corner.

The very air seemed laden with the buying and selling of stocks, bonds and other securities.

It seemed terribly close to Will, who was accustomed to the free and healthy atmosphere of the open country.

"So I'm in Wall Street at last," he muttered to himself as he took in his strange surroundings. "My gracious! It's a lively place. I wonder why Arte Latham called me Josh Whitcomb, and asked me if I was from Charcoal Hollow, New Hampshire? I guess that must be one of the jokes they play on newcomers to Wall Street. I'm afraid that valise does make me look like a hayseed. I'll be glad when I get it out of sight in a room. I don't like being made fun of."

It wasn't long before Latham returned with an envelope in his hand which he handed through a small window in the brass screen to the cashier.

Then he looked around the room for Will, and spying him in his own chair drew up another and sat beside him.

"What do you think of New York as far as you've seen it?" he asked Will.

"I think it is the biggest place on earth," replied the boy from Millbank.

"Oh, there are bigger places—London, and Paris, for instance."

"New York is big enough for me, and the buildings are taller and bigger than they looked in the pictures I've seen of them."

"They're building taller ones every little while. I wouldn't be surprised if they put up a hundred-story one in the course of time."

"Mr. Douglas told you that he expected me to come on this week, didn't he?"

"Yes, by Wednesday; and he instructed me to show you the ropes from A to Z."

"I managed to get away sooner than I counted on," said Will. "That's why I'm on hand to-day. Mr. Douglas told me that the earlier I got here the better."

"That's right, for you've a lot to pick up, and you must be qualified to do my work immediately after I leave."

"Well, if you will put me next to the business I'll guarantee to pick it up fast enough," said Will confidently.

"I guess you will. You look pretty smart."

At that moment the cashier called Latham over and handed him a note to give Mr. Douglas at the Exchange.

"I've got to go over to the Exchange with a note to Mr. Douglas. You'd better come along with me. I'll put your valise out of harm's way."

In a few minutes the boys were out on Wall Street, heading for Broad Street and the Stock Exchange.

"This is the messengers' entrance," said Latham when they reached the building, "where you always go in when you have a note to deliver to the boss when he's on the floor."

Will made a mental note of the fact.

Business was booming, and the Exchange was like a roaring maelstrom in full swing.

"Great Scott!" cried Will. "Is there a free fight going on inside?"

"Hardly, though most of them are fighting to get the better of one another."

"It's enough to deafen one."

"You'll get so used to the racket that you won't notice it at all after a little time. Come up to the rail."

A dozen other messengers were lined up waiting to deliver messages to brokers.

Arte was apparently known to most of them.

"Who have you got in tow, Art?" asked one of them, eyeing Will curiously. "Relative from Squedunk?"

"No; a friend of mine. Wicker, this is Joe Banker. He carries messages for Thorndyke & Co. I want you to use him right, Joe, for he's going to take my place at the office."

"That so? Glad to know you, Wicker. I had an idea you hailed from the country."

"So I do."

"Where from? Up State?"

"Millbank, New Jersey."

"Oh, you're a 'Skeeter?" grinned Banker.

"What do you mean by that?"

"We call the boys from Jersey 'Skeeters.'"

Latham asked an attendant to find Mr. Douglas and bring him to the rail.

The broker came up, took the note, and at the same time recognized Will.

"Hello, Wicker!" he exclaimed in some surprise, offering his hand to Will. "I did not expect to see you so soon."

"You said the sooner I came the better," replied the boy.

"I did, and I meant it; but I did not think you'd be able to get away from your home before the middle of the week."

"I concluded that if I was coming I might as well make a start, so here I am."

"All right. You go around with Latham until I get over to the office, when I'll have a talk with you."

"Yes, sir."

The broker turned away and then Latham and Will returned to the office.

Mr. Douglas came in about half-past two, and after transacting some business that awaited him he called Will into his private room.

"Well, you've had an insight into the messenger business. How do you like it?"

"All right, sir," replied Will with sparkling eyes.

"Like all new things, it looks easier and more interesting than you'll find it when you get used to it. You'll learn by degrees that it's a pretty strenuous occupation, and a tiresome one. Much depends on the promptness with which a message is delivered. A boy who loiters by the way may cause a loss of many thousands of dollars to his employer. A boy who makes many mistakes is also useless as a messenger. You will often have to deliver verbal messages, and in such cases I need hardly tell you that accuracy is of the first importance. Have you a good memory?"

"Yes, sir," replied Will, paying strict attention to the broker's words.

"When you have to ask questions of brokers, or of any person, in fact, do so politely. When they reply to you thank them in a courteous manner. A gentlemanly boy is always liked, and one can't make too good an impression in this world, whether in Wall Street or elsewhere. An ill-bred boy is sure to be disliked, and it is going to hurt him in the long run."

Will agreed with the broker in that particular.

"You will have the advantage of two weeks' breaking in under the direction of as smart a messenger as there is in the Street. You ought to be thoroughly up in your duties by the time he quits the office. He has also consented to take you under his wing after office hours as well, and make you generally acquainted with the city. Have you looked up a boarding place yet?"

"No, sir. Latham has promised to take me around to what he calls Greenwich Village and get me a place this afternoon."

"He'll find you a suitable home, for he lives in that part of the city himself. By the way, how are you off for money?"

"I've got a little over \$25, sir."

"Well, that ought to carry you over. I'll allow you \$3.50 a week while you're learning, and after that your wages till further notice will be \$7. Arte will tell you what your office hours are, and give you all further particulars. You may go outside now and sit down till it is time for Arte to take you uptown."

When Latham got off at half-past three he took Will to a small two-story and attic brick house, on a quiet side street, occupied by a widow lady and her daughter.

She agreed to give Will a small room with board for a moderate price.

Latham then showed him around the neighborhood, and pointed out the Ninth Avenue elevated station.

Will found no difficulty in reaching the Christopher Street station in the morning, where he waited till Arte showed up, and they went to the office together.

During the week he accompanied Latham everywhere he went, and when the office closed Saturday at one o'clock he had the financial district down pretty fine.

He also called on Broker Arden at his office, and the young trader was glad to see him.

They had quite a talk together, during which Arden gave Will a whole lot of excellent advice that was bound to be of service to him.

During the week Will wrote a letter to Mr. Crimp, enclosing a short one to Bessie, and told them that he was getting on fine, and would soon be earning \$7 a week.

On the following Tuesday a letter addressed in Obadiah Crimp's handwriting was given to Will by Mr. Douglas.

It contained an enclosure from Bessie.

Mr. Crimp said that after an explosion from Mrs. Crimp over his sudden departure things had settled down into their old groove again.

He said he had hired Dave Tarbox to attend to Will's duties, and that he was doing very well.

The whole village had missed Will, and the inhabitants were greatly astonished to learn that the boy had gone to New York to work in Wall Street.

Old man Peaseley said that his son Nat, as soon as he found out that Will had gone to Wall Street, bothered him night and day for permission to hike to York himself, and even threatened to run away if he wasn't allowed to go.

Bessie wrote a very sweet and sad little note telling Will how much she missed him, and how she hoped he would soon make money enough to send for her, as she couldn't be happy away from him.

The end of the second week of Will's experience in Wall Street came around and found him fully competent to step into Arte Latham's shoes and make good.

On Monday morning Will began his Wall Street career in earnest, and he soon demonstrated his fitness and capabilities to the satisfaction of Mr. Douglas, who in a little while told Broker Arden that Will Wicker was proving himself one of the best messengers in the Street.

CHAPTER VII.

WILL'S FIRST SUCCESS ON THE MARKET.

"Say, Wicker," said Joe Banker one morning when the two boys met at the Stock Exchange, "got any dough that you don't want for a few days?"

"I can lend you half a dollar if you want," replied Will, putting his hand in his pocket.

"I don't want to borrow any. I only wanted to know if you had a \$10 bill lying around loose in your clothes that you had no immediate use for."

"Why did you want to know that?"

"Because I could let you in on a good thing."

"How?"

"There's a bunch of us chaps who make money right along in the market. When one of us gets hold of a tip on some good stock we club together and buy five or ten shares, according to how flush we are. When the price goes up a few points we cash in and divide up the winnings pro rata."

"Who do you buy the stock from? I heard that no broker would deal with boys, and that they did not care to deal in less than 100 shares of any stock."

"You heard correct, but we don't buy through any broker. There's a little bank up Nassau Street that does a brokerage business, too. Anybody can buy as low as five shares of any stock on the list by putting up a margin of 10 per cent. In fact, I have known the bank to make a deal with a messenger on a 5 per cent. basis, but it was risky for the messenger. However, he came out all right."

"Then you buy through that bank, do you?"

"That's what we do. Well, one of the chaps got hold of a good sure thing yesterday and we're trying to raise \$100 to back it. If you can go in \$10 you'll be entitled to one-tenth of the profits."

"What do you suppose the profits will be?" asked Will with much interest.

"At least \$10 a share this time, and probably more than that. A number of big brokers have formed a pool to boom a certain stock. The deal is bound to go through, as the men have millions at their back to push it."

"If I put in \$10 how much ought I to get back?"

"You'll get your tenner back and as much more on top of it."

"I'll go in with you," said Will.

"Got the money with you?"

"Yes. Here it is," said Will, pulling out \$25.

"Say, what's the matter with you putting in \$20? You'll make twice as much then."

"I don't like to take too much of a risk. I'm saving this money for a particular purpose."

"You're not taking any risk at all. It's a sure winner. Just the same as finding money."

Will, however, hesitated.

Twenty dollars of his hoarded capital was a lot for him to risk, for he wanted to bring Bessie to the city as soon as he could.

Still, the prospect of winning \$20 was a big temptation, for then he'd have about enough to send for the girl.

Joe hastened to assure him that his \$20 was just as safe as if it was in his own pocket, so he was persuaded to entrust it to the other to invest for him.

As soon as Banker had the money he told Will that the stock about to be boomed was D. & G., which was going then at 80.

"But you mustn't whisper a word about it. And don't let your boss suspect that you're in on any deal. He wouldn't like it, and would probably read you the riot act. Just say nothing and saw wood. A friend of mine will put the deal through the bank for us, and when he sells out I'll bring you your share of the profits."

Naturally Will took a strong interest in D. & G. after that.

He took sly peeps at the ticker and when he saw the stock quoted at 81 he felt like hugging himself for joy.

Within a few days the price went up to 85, and Will was just tickled to death.

He met Joe Banker quite often, and Joe told him that many messenger boys made two and three times their wages through fortunate deals on the market, all put through the little bank.

The result was that Will became inoculated with the speculative fever, and he began to see visions of other deals in which he would make a lot of money and ultimately grow rich like most of the traders.

At the end of ten days D. & G. was up to 96, at which price the deal in which Will was interested was closed and next day Joe Banker handed him \$51, representing his \$20 investment and \$31 profits.

Will gazed at the money in great satisfaction.

He was now worth \$57, and he felt that he could send for Bessie right away.

That afternoon, however, while waiting to see a broker he accidentally overheard two brokers talking in a low tone about the consolidation of two Western railroads.

One of the roads was called P. & Q.

The stock had been selling away down for two years, and

nobody particularly wanted it as an investment because the road did not pay any dividends.

One of the traders said that as soon as the news of the consolidation was made public, which would be in a few days, P. & Q. stock would go up from 20 to 30 points.

Will was much excited over what he had heard.

He saw the chance of making over \$100 by investing his \$50 in the stock.

He determined not to let the chance get past him.

On his way home he went up to the little bank, which kept its brokerage department open till four o'clock, and asked the porter of the bank where he should go to buy some stock on margin.

"Go to that window yonder. Give your order and your money to the clerk you'll see there, and he'll attend to the matter for you."

"Thank you," said Will, and forthwith marched up to the window in question.

"Well," said the margin clerk, looking at him inquiringly, "what can I do for you, young man?"

"I want to buy five shares of P. & Q. on a 10 per cent. margin."

"Have you got \$50 with you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Will, laying the money down on the window shelf.

The clerk filled out a paper and pushed it out to the young messenger.

"Sign your name and address there."

"My business address or where I board?"

"Either will do. Are you working in Wall Street?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who are you with?"

"Archibald Douglas, stock broker."

The margin clerk grinned.

"That's all," he said. "The stock will be bought in the morning and held subject to your order as long as your margin holds good. You understand, I hope, that if the price goes below the limit the bank will sell out without notice in order to protect itself."

"If that's your rule I suppose it's all right."

"That's the way we do business. Whenever you want to sell come around and I will hand you an order to sign. Our commission is one-eighth of 1 per cent. for buying, and the same for selling, with a small additional charge for interest on the money that we advance to put the deal through for you. On five shares it is hardly anything to speak of."

"Thank you, sir. Good-afternoon."

Will went home feeling that if luck stood by him he would have quite a little bank roll in a few days.

P. & Q. was ruling at 40 when Will bought the five shares, and it remained at that figure for nearly a week, keeping the young messenger on the anxious seat.

Then it went up two points, and on the following day the news of the consolidation was printed in all the papers.

When the Exchange opened there was a rush by the traders to buy the stock.

Very little of it was to be got at any price, and the stock was soon selling at 55.

Before the Exchange closed it was up to 60.

"I wonder if I hadn't better sell?" Will asked himself. "I'm \$100 ahead."

The prospect of making a few more dollars induced him to hold on, and the price went to 68.

He would have held on longer, only he heard a broker say to a friend that P. & Q. was looking topheavy, and must drop to around 60 in a day or two, so that afternoon he stopped at the bank as soon as he was through for the day and told the margin clerk to sell his stock.

"It will be sold first thing in the morning," said the clerk. "You're a lucky lad to be in on P. & Q. at this time. How came you to buy it? Get hold of a tip?"

Will said nothing, but looked wise.

Next morning his shares were sold at 69, and when the bank settled with him he found he had made \$140 profit, making him worth \$200 altogether.

"Gee! I never thought I'd be worth so much money so soon. I tell you Wall Street is the place to get rich if you run in luck. I'm going to travel down to Millbank in a new suit of clothes and a swell tie next Sunday and make the folks there stare. And when I come back I'll bring Bessie with me. I'll have to ask my boarding missus if she'll look out for her till she can get a position of some kind. I guess she'll be willing to do that to oblige me."

CHAPTER VIII.

WILL VISITS MILLBANK AND CREATES SOMETHING OF A SENSATION.

When Will stepped off the Long Branch accommodation at Millbank on Sunday morning he was looking something like a dude.

The first person he ran against was the station agent, whom he knew well.

The man, however, didn't seem to recognize him.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Watts?" Will asked.

"Will Wicker!" gasped the agent. "Great Scott! What have you been doing to yourself?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you're dressed up to the ninety-nines. Did you rob a bank while you was away at the city?"

"I hope you haven't such a bad opinion of me as that," laughed Will.

"I heard you left suddenly to take a job in Wall Street."

"That's right."

"You must be getting big wages to afford to dress in this style. If the folks around here knew you were coming to visit the village in such great shape they'd be out here with a band to meet you."

"I'd be sorry to put them to such an expense," smiled Will.

"If you don't create a sensation walking through Millbank to the hotel I'll be willing to eat my hat. Here comes a friend of yours—Nat Peaseley. I hope he won't have a fit when he sees you."

"Hello, Nat! How are things about the village?" asked Will, as his country friend, clad in his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes, with his hair well oiled and plastered down, came on the station.

Nat didn't seem to recognize Will at first, either, but as his eyes gradually took in Will's well-known features he gave a gurgling gasp.

"Gosh all hemlock! Are you Will Wicker?" he said in amazement.

"That's who I am, Nat."

"Why, you're a—dude!" he fluttered.

"Oh, no, not quite a dude."

"Yes, you are. Where did you get all them swell clothes, and that hat, and that tie with a diamond pin? Glory hal-lelujah! Have you made your fortin already?"

"Hardly," laughed Will.

"Why, you don't look no more like you used to than a turkey gobbler looks like a rooster. You look just like a city chap."

"I feel like one now. I ought to, for I've been three months in New York."

"You mean in Wall Street, don't you?"

"Wall Street is part of lower New York."

"Gol darn it, I thought Wall Street was the hull of New York. The papers are always full of it. My dad says Wall Street runs the hull country."

"I guess it does run it to a considerable extent."

"Say, do you expect to reach the hotel alive in that soot?" asked Nat.

"Why not?"

"I think it's doubtful. The gals will mob you sure as eggs is eggs."

"Perhaps they won't recognize me."

"You let 'em alone for that. I've hearn them talkin' 'bout how they was goin' to set their caps for you when you got back with a big wad of money. They all know that you went to Wall Street to make your fortin. By gum! I've been at the old man ever since you've been away to let me go to York to get rich, too. I reckon I'll go back with you, anyway, whether the old man likes it or not. How long d'ye expect to stay in the village?"

"I'm going back on the 7:10 train to-night."

"Can't you stay down here no longer?"

"No. I've got to be at the office at nine in the morning, sharp."

"At nine. Is that when you go to work?"

"Yes."

"And when do you quit?"

"Around half-past three."

"Jumpin' grasshoppers! You must be one of the pardners, ain't you?"

"I'm just the messenger and office boy."

"Is that all? And you kin dress like that! You must git \$100 a week."

"No, I get considerably less."

"Then clothes must be dirt cheap in York. What did you pay for that soot?"

"Sixteen dollars for the coat, vest and pants."

"That's a pretty tidy sum. How much for the tie and the diamond?"

"That isn't a real diamond. It cost me ten cents and the tie thirty-five cents."

"That all? Gosh! I'd give a quarter for it. I'd have all the gals on a string in no time at all."

"If you'll meet me at the 7:10 train to-night I'll give it to you."

"You will? I'll be here, bet your life, if I bust a button makin' it."

"Well, I must be getting on to the hotel. Good-bye till train time."

Will walked along through Main Street and soon at-

tracted a whole lot of attention from the people in the houses.

Nobody seemed to recognize him, though everybody in the village knew him.

He was taken for a strange city chap, and folks wondered what had brought him to Millbank on a Sunday.

A dozen or more girls noticed him through their half-closed blinds, but none of them got a square look at his face.

Finally he reached the Millbank Hotel.

Mr. Crimp and old man Peaseley were sitting on the veranda in the sunshine.

There was no look of recognition or welcome for the boy in their eyes as he approached.

"How do you do, pop?" said Will, as he stepped on the veranda.

He used to address Mr. Crimp by that name sometimes. The landlord sprang to his feet with a cry of astonishment.

"Will, is it really you?"

"It isn't anybody else, pop," said the boy, holding out his hand.

"Why, you look like a young gentleman," replied the hotel keeper, gazing at Will admiringly. "Don't you know, Will Wicker, Seth?"

Seth Peaseley rubbed his glasses and looked hard at Will.

"B'gosh! It is Will. Why, you're tucked out to beat all creation! Ef my gal Sukey saw you now she'd fall plumb in love with you."

Will shook hands with old man Peaseley and said he was glad to see him again.

"You must be makin' money hand over fist," said Peaseley. "I hope my son don't see you. If he does they'll be no keepin' him away from Wall Street."

"I met Nat at the station," replied Will.

"Sho! Did you? What did he say?"

"You'd better ask me what he didn't say. He looked surprised."

"I should think he would. Are you a broker now?"

"Not quite," laughed Will.

"How soon do you expect to be one?"

"I couldn't tell you."

"You must be gettin' more'n a hundred a week judgin' by your clothes and that ther dimund pin. How much is it worth?"

"How much do you think?"

"Dimunds is purty valuable. Maybe \$500."

"Not quite. I've promised to give it to Nat to-night."

"What! That dimund?"

"Yes."

"Say, you don't mean no sich thing as that. Nat couldn't earn that dimund in ten year."

"I'm going in to see the missus, pop. Do you think it's safe?" asked Will.

"I reckon she'll be glad to see you lookin' so prosperous," replied Mr. Crimp encouragingly.

So Will entered the public room of the hotel and walked through the dining-room to the kitchen where Mrs. Crimp, assisted by Bessie, was preparing dinner.

Bessie saw him first, recognized him, and with a little cry dropped the dish she held in her hand.

It went to smash on the floor and Mrs. Crimp uttered an exclamation of anger.

Bessie darted for Will, and in a moment he had her in his arms, the lady of the house looking at them in utter amazement.

"Will, Will, I'm so glad you've come back," cried Bessie. "And how fine you do look!"

"Will Wicker!" gasped Mrs. Crimp, hardly believing the evidence of her eyes.

"Yes, ma'am. I've come back to see you for a few hours," replied the boy.

"Only for a few hours, Will?" said Bessie wistfully.

"That's all. I have to return to the city by the 7:10 train this evening. But," he added in a whisper, "you are going back with me."

"Will, you don't mean it!" she cried excitedly.

"Hush! I'll talk to you about it by and by. Well, Mrs. Crimp, are you glad to see me or not?"

"I s'pose I am, though I did mean to larrup you for runnin' away if I'd got my hands on you at the time. You must be doin' well in York."

"I'm getting on first-rate."

"So you writ Obadiah. Workin' for one of them brokers what was down here shootin', eh?"

"Yes. For Mr. Douglas. I'm his messenger."

"Does he send you around with messages?"

"Yes, ma'am. I carry notes to other brokers, packages of stocks and bonds to customers, and do a whole lot of other things."

"He must pay you well. You look like a dood."

"I get \$7 a week."

"How can you dress so well and pay your board and washin' on \$7?"

"Oh, I get tips from people, and there are other ways of making extra money."

"I guess you make a good deal more than your wages."

"I have so far. I've brought you a present of a new dress. It isn't made up, but you can have the village dress-maker do that for you. I'll give you \$5 to pay her."

Mrs. Crimp was all smiles in a moment.

"Bessie, I left the package on the dining-room table. Go and get it," said Will.

The girl hastened to do as she had been requested.

Will handed Mrs. Crimp the bundle.

"Open it and see how you like it. I got my landlady to buy it for you, with lining, trimming and buttons complete. All you'll have to do is to get it made according to pattern."

Mrs. Crimp was delighted with her present, which happened to be of a shade that just suited her, and thus, by the exercise of a little tact and the expenditure of a few dollars Will had made himself quite solid with her.

He was afraid, however, that her good humor would not last when she learned that he intended taking Bessie to New York with him.

She had no legal claim on the girl, and could not prevent her leaving if she got up spunk enough to do so, but just the same she could make matters pretty sultry if she wanted to do so.

After inspecting her dress Mrs. Crimp became very gracious to Will, and asked him many questions about his business and about how he was getting on in New York.

Then he went outside and found Mr. Crimp returning

from a short walk with old man Peaseley, who had gone home.

Will talked with Mr. Crimp on the veranda until dinner was announced.

After the meal he told Mrs. Crimp that he expected to take Bessie to the city with him on the 7:10 train.

If he had dropped a bombshell in the room he could hardly have caused the lady of the house to jump higher than she did.

She said the idea was perfectly ridiculous.

Then Will put it up to Bessie.

"I'm ready to take you if you're ready to come. What do you say?"

"I'll go with you anywhere, Will," she replied.

"I reckon you won't take your things out of the house to-night, or any other time, unless I'm willin'," was Mrs. Crimp's ultimatum. "I'm surprised that you should encourage the girl to think of leavin' me," she flashed at Will angrily.

"If you'd always treated her decent, Mrs. Crimp, I shouldn't have interfered in her behalf. You used to beat her every day when I lived here, and you've not improved much since I've been away. Bessie is getting too old to be made a slave of any longer. I can get her a job in the city that will enable her to pay her way and give her a little spending money. My landlady has agreed to give her a home, and she will have the companionship of the lady's daughter, a girl of her own age. Altogether, it will be greatly to her advantage to come to New York," said Will.

Mrs. Crimp got into one of her old pugnacious moods, but Will was not to be intimidated.

Bessie, also, for once in her life, refused to be bulldozed, and the result was after the biggest kind of a verbal scrap Will carried his point after threatening to refer the whole matter to the justice of the village.

It was arranged that Bessie should remain another month at the hotel, at the end of which she was to be allowed to go to New York.

The matter having been finally patched up, peace was declared in the family circle to the great satisfaction of Mr. Crimp, who was always uneasy when there were clouds on the domestic horizon.

After supper Will bade all good-bye for the period of thirty days, when he said he would come for Bessie, and, after presenting Nat Peaseley with the imitation diamond pin, took the 7:10 train for the metropolis.

CHAPTER IX.

A CLOSE CALL.

A few mornings after Will saw a statement in the paper that M. & N. was going up as the result of rumors concerning the road's purchase of a branch line to the coal mines which were beginning to pan out better than at any other period in their history.

"What do you think about M. & N., Joe?" Will asked Banker when they came together on the street that afternoon.

"Dunno," replied Joe. "Haven't paid any attention to it."

Will told him what the newspapers printed about the road that morning.

"You can't put much dependence on what the papers say," said Banker. "They'll publish any old thing in the way of news."

"But if it's true that the M. & N. road has bought that branch line it will be a good thing for the company, won't it?"

"Sure, it will, otherwise the company wouldn't buy it."

"The brokers must believe that there is something in the report, for the price is rising."

"That doesn't follow. The bulls always try to take advantage of every excuse to boost prices. That's the mission of a bull. The bears do just the opposite—they work to break prices in order to make money on short sales."

"I've a great mind to buy some M. & N. on the chance that it may go higher."

"Well, if you want to risk \$50 on five shares you can buy them easily enough at the little bank on Nassau Street; but I wouldn't advise you to get in on it without you had some better guarantee than newspaper talk."

That afternoon Will heard a group of traders talking about the M. & N. rise, and they spoke so well of the chances of the stock that Will left an order at the bank on his way home for fifteen shares of M. & N. at the market, which was 62.

He watched the stock all next day and saw with satisfaction that it rose steadily to 65.

The newspapers continued to speak favorably as to the prospects of a still higher price, and so Will was content to let the deal stand.

M. & N. closed that day at 67 and opened next morning at 67 1-2.

The bears attacked the stock and it took on a temporary slump, but recovered rapidly and went up to 70.

Next day the scarcity of the shares on the market caused a big boom in the price and it closed at 80.

"Have you sold those fifteen shares of M. & N. you bought?" asked Banker when the boys met at the restaurant at a quarter past three.

"Not yet," replied Will.

"You're holding on too long, old man," replied Joe. "I had no idea it would get anywhere near 80. It's a case of pig luck that it has done so. There is liable to be a slump at any moment, and your profits are likely to be wiped out. Leave an order at the bank on your way home to sell you out in the morning. You're eighteen points ahead of the game and it's up to you to realize while you have the chance to do so. If you get out all right you can count yourself as having made a bang-up deal. You'll make over \$250, which is a pile of coin for a messenger to gather in, you can take my word for it."

"You told me that several messengers in the Street have made a good deal more than that," said Will.

"So they did, but not on an investment of \$150. They made it by taking risks with big money that they had won before."

"I'll follow your advice. I guess you know the market better than I."

"I ought to, for I've been three years in the business, while you have only been down here about four months."

"You ought to have made several thousand dollars by this time," said Will.

"I know I ought to, but I haven't. I was \$600 ahead of

the game once, and then I got wiped clean out on a single deal."

"Is that so?"

"Sure as you live. If that deal had gone through I'd have made over \$1,500 profit."

"Instead of which you lost your \$600?"

"I lost it so quick that it made my head swim. I held on too long, just like you've been doing. Guess I was trying to grab the last dollar. It's a risky thing to look for all that's in a deal. The chances are that you'll land in the soup like I did. You never can tell just where you are when a stock is going up. The bears are likely to jump in at an unexpected moment and scoop the trick."

Joe's talk made Will nervous about his deal.

He left his order at the bank on the way home, but he didn't feel easy that evening about the fate of M. & N. in the morning.

He dreamed that he had been cleaned out and woke up in a funk about the middle of the night.

When he got to sleep he had a repetition of the dream, more vivid than before, and he awoke again in a cold sweat.

It was an hour before he got to sleep again, and when he woke it was daylight and time to get up.

He grabbed the morning paper at the station in feverish nervousness, expecting to read that M. & N. had gone to smash over night.

He was much relieved to find that such was not the case.

His stock was sold at 80 3-8, and fifteen minutes afterward some broker began dumping big blocks of the stock on the market.

The result was a slump and a panic at the Exchange.

"What did I tell you?" said Joe, running against him at the Exchange. "Did you sell out last night as I advised you to?"

"I gave my order in," replied Will; "but I don't know whether my shares were sold in time or not."

"The chances are they were, but you can't tell for sure till you inquire at the bank," replied Banker. "I hope you've come out all right, but you see how dangerous it is to hold on too long. Lots of people are being cleaned out at this moment. Some of them are brokers, I'll bet, but the majority are the outside speculators or lambs, as we call them."

At noon Will was sent to a stationery house on Nassau Street by the cashier and he dropped into the bank as nervous as an applicant standing examination for a good job.

The margin clerk told him that his stock had been sold, and that he could have a settlement that afternoon.

Will left the bank feeling like a fighting cock, and later on he found he had made a profit of \$275, which raised his available capital to \$450.

Next morning he told Banker that he had come out all right, and Joe congratulated him on his good luck.

CHAPTER X.

NAT PEASELEY VISITS NEW YORK.

Ten days passed and then Will, who was now watching the stock market like a hawk, noticed that another stock called S. & L. was going up.

He consulted the record of past performances of this

road and saw that it had been hanging fire around 50 for six months or more.

It reached 53 in a day or two and Will concluded to take a shy at it.

He went to the little bank and ordered the margin clerk to buy 40 shares for his account.

In a few days the stock went to 60 and a fraction and Will sold out, making an even \$300.

The stock kept on rising and went to 69, which fact caused the young messenger to regret that he had sold too soon.

However, as he had no means of telling how high it was going he comforted himself with the reflection that half a loaf is better than no bread.

"I've made \$300, at any rate, and now I'm worth \$750," he said to himself. "I've done pretty well for a country boy who hasn't been quite four months in Wall Street. If I can make another lucky deal I'll have \$1,000 or more to look at and call my own."

About this time he received a letter from Mr. Crimp.

The hotel keeper said that his wife had not been able to secure a girl to take Bessie's place, and he asked, as a personal favor, that Will would not insist on the exact terms of his agreement.

He and his wife wanted Bessie to stay a while longer, and he assured Will that the girl was now being treated with every consideration.

Will wrote back, enclosing a note to Bessie, and told Mr. Crimp that if Bessie was willing to stay another month he was satisfied to let her.

Bessie answered that she would remain, as she and Mrs. Crimp were getting on very well together.

A few days afterward Banker met Will and asked him to go into another deal with the crowd, and he consented to put in \$50 on B. & O., which Joe said a syndicate was going to boom.

The stock was bought at 96, went up to 101, then slumped back to 92, where it remained.

The deal was a failure and Will lost \$25.

Banker told him that he mustn't expect to win all the time.

"If there was a syndicate back of it why didn't it go higher than 101?" asked Will, who was disappointed with the result of the deal.

"I couldn't tell you. A screw came loose, I guess, and the whole thing fell in the soup."

While the young messenger felt that he had got out easy, the whole thing gave him a shock, for he thought had he been making the deal himself with all his funds at stake he would have lost heavily.

He was not quite so anxious after that to get in on the market as he had been before, for he saw how easy it was to get caught in the shuffle.

When he got back to the office after his talk with Joe Banker he was paralyzed to find Nat Peaseley waiting for him in the reception-room.

"By gum! I'm here in Wall Street at last," declared Nat, shaking him by the hand. "The old man gave me the dough and let me come on to try and make my fortin. I'm ready to take a job carryin' messages for anybody that wants me, and I'll take less than a hundred dollars to do it. Gosh! But this here town is a big place. I might

have got lost if it hadn't been for two policemen who showed me the way down here."

"Did you come here looking for a job?"

"I reckon I didn't come for nothin' else, except it was to see you. Bessie Kane sent her love to you. I wanted her to send you a kiss, but she kind of fought shy of that. If you want that you'll have to go down to the hotel and collect it yourself."

"I'm glad to see you, Nat, but I'm afraid you've come on a fool's errand."

"Why so? I'm ready and willin' to work."

"But you know nothing about the financial district."

"Neither did you when you first come on."

"But I had an experienced messenger to show me the ropes."

"Well, you kin show them to me, can't you? You ought to be experienced by this time."

"You forget I was hired to take that boy's place, and that's how I was able to get the advantage of his knowledge."

"Well, I'm goin' around to hunt up a job, and then you kin make me wise to the ropes, as you call 'em."

"No broker would hire you under such an arrangement."

"Wouldn't he? How do you know that?"

"Because it would take you a week at least before you'd be able to carry a message in any kind of time."

"What's a week? That's only seven days. No broker would miss that time."

"But no broker can afford to wait till you learned the business."

"Say, what do you want to throw cold water on a feller for? Don't you want me in town?"

"I'd be glad to have you here, and there's no reason why you shouldn't stay if you'll look up another kind of a job."

"What other kind of a job?"

"Something that doesn't require experience to start with."

"Give it a name and, by gum! I'll hunt it up if it's in town."

At that moment the cashier called Will.

There was a note for him to take to the Exchange to Mr. Douglas.

"I've got to go over to the Stock Exchange. You'd better come with me."

"All right. Where will I put my carpetbag? Shall I take it with me?"

"I'll take charge of it," and Will carried it into the counting-room.

"By Christopher! That's a swell lookin' gal poundin' that there machine. What is she doin'? Makin' somethin'?"

"She's operating a typewriter."

"What's that?"

"A machine that writes printed characters."

"Do you sell characters at this place, too?"

Will laughed.

"You don't understand me. Wait till we get back and I'll take you inside and let you see how it works."

"All right. I wouldn't mind gettin' another peep at that gal. There's a whole lot of style about her, and that's what I like. I reckon the gals down our way are behind the times. They don't look nothin' like her."

On the way to the Exchange Nat gazed around with staring eyes and open mouth.

He was so interested in all that was going on around him that he didn't look where he was putting his No. 10 shoes; the result was he fell over the curb.

As he picked himself up his sharp eyes spied a pocket-book within his reach.

"By gum! I've found somethin'," he said to Will, holding the wallet up.

"Gracious! You're lucky," cried Will in surprise.

"I reckon I was born so. Let's see what's in it."

There was a five-dollar bill and a slip of paper in it.

"You kin have half that five, Will. There ain't nothin' mean about me."

"No, I don't want it. It's yours, for you found it. Let me see that paper."

Nat handed it to him.

Will opened it, thinking that it might furnish a clue to the owner of the book.

This is what he read:

"PARADISE, NEVADA.

"DEAR HANK: You remember the old Harlequin Silver Mine that never was nothing more than a prospect? Well, me and a few other geezers bought the title up for next door to nothing a while ago and we've been prospecting it for a vein of ore we was told was there. We was about giving the thing up as a bad job when we discovered a lead of silver that will make us all Monte Cristos in six months hence. Now, there's 20,000 shares of Harlequin stock somewhere in New York. At the present minute it ain't worth the paper it's printed on to anybody but ourselves, 'cause nobody knows yet about the strike. If you can find that stock freeze on to it quicker than a flash of lightning. It will be worth a dollar or more a share inside of a month, as soon as we give out the news. Get a hustle on and look for it. It will be worth all the trouble it may take you to locate it. You ought to buy it for a cent a share, as Harlequin is known as a dead mine, and there isn't nothing deader than a busted mine that I know of. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, so get busy.

"Yours for luck, TOM BRADY."

"What does it say?" asked Nat.

"Something about a discovery of silver ore in a dead mine out West. I'll keep it if you don't mind."

"Gosh! You kin have it. It ain't no good to me. Don't you want half of this bill?"

"No, Nat. I've got all the funds I want."

"By gum! You're lucky. If I had all I wanted I'd need a freight car to take it hum. What the dickens is that noise? Where is it comin' from?"

"The Stock Exchange."

"You don't say. What's broke loose in there?"

"The bulls and bears are having it out," laughed Will.

"Gosh all hemlock! I'd like to look on."

"So you shall. Follow me."

They walked in at the messengers' entrance.

"Great gimeracks!" cried Nat, loud enough to call the attention of the other messengers to him. "Is there a dog fight goin' on 'round that there pole, Will?"

"No," laughed the young messenger. "Those are brokers buying and selling X. & Z. stock."

"X. & Z. stock? What kind is that? I can't see nothin' but a mob of fellers shakin' their fists at one another and hollerin' to beat the band."

"Hello, hayseed!" cried an A. D. T. boy, looking at Nat Peaseley. "Ain't you afraid of getting lost without a tag?"

"If you're tryin' to make fun of me you'll find you've got the wrong pig by the tail, by gum!" replied Nat indignantly.

A roar of laughter from the crowd of messengers greeted his words.

One of them got down on his hands and knees behind him while a companion gave Nat a shove that caused him to tumble over the other's back.

"Hold on, fellows!" cried Will. "This is a friend of mine."

Nat sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing with anger.

Then something happened that caused an uproar in the entrance.

Nat went for the crowd like a catapult.

He was as strong as a horse and he meant business.

He tumbled the messengers over like nine-pins, and fired half of them onto the sidewalk head over heels before Will was able to restrain him or an attendant interfere.

"Come on with the rest of 'em!" roared Nat, dancing around. "I kin lick all Wall Street, by gum!"

A crowd of traders rushed to the railing to see the fun.

"Cool down, Nat. You'll be hauled off to jail if you don't cut this business out. You've made rumpus enough now to cause your arrest twice over," said Will.

"I don't keer. Nobody kin play fool tricks with me if I do come from the country. I didn't say nothin' to nobody, and they upsot me on the floor. Gol darn it! I'm made enough to chew hay."

Will pushed Nat into a corner and explained matters to a couple of the attendants who came up to grab Peaseley and hand him over to an officer.

It took a whole lot of argument on Will's part to save his friend.

Finally Will delivered his note to Mr. Douglas and he and Nat left, the other messengers looking after the country boy with considerable respect for his muscle.

CHAPTER XI.

WILL BUYS SOME DEFUNCT MINING SHARES CHEAP.

Will took Nat back to the office.

"How about that there typewriter?" asked Nat, who seemed stuck on seeing the young lady again.

So Will took him inside to her desk.

"Miss Sanborn, this is Mr. Peaseley, a friend of mine."

"By gum! I'm dern glad to make your acquaintance, miss," said Nat, as the girl bowed and smiled. "I was tellin' Will here that you're the slickest gal I seen en a coon's age, and that's a mighty long time. Gosh! I know a pretty gal when I see one. Can't fool me on good-lookin' gals if I do come from the country."

The stenographer blushed and looked a bit embarrassed.

"You mustn't mind him, Miss Sanborn. He means all right," said Will.

"Oh, come, now, Will, you don't need to 'pologize for me. I reckon Miss Sanborn has been admired before. No gal objects to a feller takin' his hat off to her on account of her

good looks. I come in to see what you are makin' on that machine you're poundin' away at like fun. Will says you're writin' characters. I s'pose a feller needs them things to get a job on. I didn't think about gettin' one from my old man, but he'll back me up any time I want him to."

Will nearly had a fit, and Miss Sanborn smiled mischievously.

"You misunderstood Will," she said with a coquettish glance at Nat. "This is a machine on which I copy letters and other documents in printed characters. Just watch me."

Her nimble fingers slipped over the keys for a few moments and then she showed Nat the result on one of the office letter-headings.

"B'gosh! You done that in no time at all. What are them things you hit with your fingers?"

"Those are the keys, with the letters of the alphabet and figures on them. That one is the letter A. When I strike it that steel spoke flies up and prints the letter A on the paper."

"By gum!" ejaculated Nat.

It was hard to tell which interested the country boy the most—the machine or the fair stenographer herself.

Will was soon called on to go out again, and he took Nat with him.

He pointed out many of the office buildings and told Nat their names.

Finally Mr. Douglas came in the office and Will told him he had a visitor from the country who had come expecting to get work as a messenger in Wall Street.

The broker laughed.

"I suppose all the boys of Millbank want to come to Wall Street since they've heard that you are getting on so well," he said.

"Not all the boys," replied Will. "Some of them, no doubt. Nat Peaseley has been crazy to come here for a long time, and he's been worse on the subject since I have made a success of it."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"I don't know, sir. I'd like to get him back home, but he seems to have come to stay. I told him that he mustn't expect to get a position in Wall Street. Probably he may be willing to look elsewhere for something to do. He's a worker, and would make a first-class porter, I should think."

"A friend of mine, a merchant on Beaver Street, needs an assistant helper. I'll write a note to him recommending your friend. You can take him around to his store."

"All right, sir. I'm much obliged to you."

Mr. Douglas sent for his stenographer and dictated a note to the merchant.

"Come along, Nat. I've got a note that may get you a job. How would you like to work for a merchant?" said Will.

"By gum! I jest as lief work for him as anybody else, so long as I git paid for it."

Will took Nat to the store on Beaver Street and handed the letter to the merchant.

The gentleman questioned Nat on his general capabilities, and finally hired him at \$10 a week, directing him to come in the morning at seven o'clock.

"By gum! Will, that's more money than you're gittin' at your place," grinned Nat.

"That's right. Now I'll take you up to my boarding-house. There's a vacant room you can have for \$1.50 without board."

"Without board! Gol darn it, Will! I've got to eat, hain't I?"

"Of course. We'll see the missus about that. She doesn't take boarders as a rule. She took me as a special favor. Maybe I can persuade her to take you. If not, there's a restaurant half a block away where you can get your hash cheap."

"All right."

Will introduced Nat to his landlady, and she finally agreed to board him, so that matter was settled.

Will explained to Nat how he should take the Ninth Avenue train to Battery Place and then walk over to Beaver Street.

He said he'd find the store all right, and he did.

Will had forgotten all about the note referring to the Harlequin Silver Mine of Paradise, Nevada, but he found it in his pocket on the following morning soon after he reached the office.

"Gee! I'd like to get hold of those 20,000 shares of the stock," he said to himself. "I wonder who owns the certificates? Maybe half a dozen people or brokers who have long since looked on that mine as a dead issue. I think I'll make some inquiries about the stock. It won't do any harm."

So when Will went around among the brokers that day he inquired at every office where he called about Harlequin mining stock.

No one had any of it, nor had they had inquiries about it for eighteen months or more.

It was a dead mine, he was told, long since stricken from the market lists, and of no value whatever.

"Not worth a cent a share," said one trader. "I never handled any of it, for it never was anything but a prospect, and prospects, as a rule, aren't worth bothering with."

"Harlequin Mine?" said another. "Don't know anything about it. Got no use for dead issues. Don't believe it ever amounted to anything."

"I guess those shares are held by some people outside of Wall Street," thought Will, after he had exhausted all his available means of inquiry.

Finally he thought he'd ask the cashier of the office about the stock.

He didn't look for any results from the inquiry, however.

"Mr. Trask, did you ever hear about a mining stock called Harlequin?" he asked.

"Harlequin! Yes. It was a prospect that went out of existence two or three years ago."

"Know anybody who has any of it on hand?"

"I believe Jacob Dean, on this floor, has a block of 20,000 shares in his safe."

Will's heart gave a bound.

"Do you think he'd sell it cheap?" he asked eagerly.

"Sell it! Why, he couldn't give it away. Nobody wants a valueless stock."

"He must consider it of some value or he wouldn't lumber his safe up with it."

"Oh, he's one of those brokers who would hold on to a

scrap of paper on the chance that somebody might want to buy it some day."

"How did he get hold of a stock that has no value?"

"A man left it with him as security for a small loan. That was when it was in the mining lists, and had a nominal value of five cents a share. The man never called to repay the money, and never will. He died in one of the city hospitals soon after from the effects of an operation."

"If you say Mr. Dean couldn't give it away he might be willing to sell it cheap."

"Who wants it?"

"I do."

"What do you want with a useless stock?" asked the cashier in surprise.

"I'm making a collection of defunct mining shares," grinned Will.

"You ought to be able to find enough of that kind in Wall Street to fill a good-sized cellar."

"May I go in and ask him what he wants for the stock?"

"You may; but don't let him think you want it bad, for if you do he'll ask you a good price."

Will walked down the corridor to Broker Dean's office. The trader was in and received him in his private office.

"What can I do for you, young man?" he inquired.

"I'm making a collection of certificates of bursted mines. I was told that you have some Harlequin mining shares."

"Who told you so?"

"Mr. Trask, of our office."

"I've got four certificates of 5,000 shares each. If you'll take them all I'll let you have them cheap."

"What do you call cheap?"

"One hundred dollars."

"That's too much. The stock isn't worth anything."

"What do you want with it?"

"Keep it as a curiosity. I'll give you \$10 for one of the certificates."

"Take the four and you may have them for \$40."

"I'm afraid I can't afford it."

"How much can you afford?"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"Hand me the money and you can have them."

Will counted out \$25, and Mr. Dean went outside and after a few minutes returned with the certificates.

"Going to frame them?" he asked with a chuckle as he handed them to the boy.

"I may. By the way, give me a receipt for the money, will you?"

"What for? You've got the certificates. What more do you want?"

"I'd like some evidence to show that I paid \$25 for them."

"Why?"

"People might think I got them for nothing."

"What difference does it make what they think?"

"I'd like to be able to prove that I really did pay something for them."

Broker Dean drew up a receipt stating that he had that day sold Will Wicker four certificates of Harlequin mining stock for \$25 cash.

"Thank you, sir," said Will. "Good-day."

"Good-day," chuckled the trader, and the door closed after the boy.

CHAPTER XII.

NEWS FROM THE HARLEQUIN SILVER MINE.

"I've got the stock," said Will, exhibiting the four certificates to Mr. Trask, the cashier, on his return to the office.

"What did you pay him for them?"

"Twenty-five dollars. He asked me \$100 at first."

"Upon my word, young man, you must have money to throw away. I told you that the stock of that mine is worthless."

"It may pan out yet."

"There isn't one chance in a hundred of it doing so."

"Don't be too sure of that, Mr. Trask," replied Will significantly.

"Have you heard anything about that mine?" asked the cashier, noticing the young messenger's tone and manner.

"I have."

"What did you hear about it?" asked Mr. Trask with an air of some interest.

"I heard that a fine vein of silver ore had been discovered in the mine."

"You did?" ejaculated the cashier in surprise. "When and how did you get hold of the information?"

"I would prefer not to say just at present."

"Did you see it in one of the financial papers?"

"No, sir."

"Hear any broker talking about it?"

"No, sir."

"Then I don't see how——"

"Maybe you'll see a report of the discovery in the papers before thirty days. At any rate I consider my information worth risking \$25 on. If it should amount to nothing I won't go broke."

Will watched the financial papers after that every day for some indication of the report of the discovery of silver in the Harlequin mine.

Day after day went by and nothing happened.

At the end of three weeks the boy began to wonder if the letter containing the alleged information amounted to anything after all.

Nat Peaseley was getting acquainted with the city fast.

He and Will traveled around together every night and on Sunday and had a good time together.

Nat liked his job, which he filled satisfactorily, and he was tickled to death with the big wages he was getting.

His hours were pretty long, as compared with Will's, but he didn't mind that for a cent, as he was used to working long hours on his father's farm in the country.

It was about this time that Will, while eagerly awaiting some sign in the papers about the Harlequin Silver Mine, found out one afternoon that a pool had been formed to boom L. & M. stock.

Satisfied that he had got hold of a gilt-edged tip, he went to the little bank and bought 70 shares of the stock, putting up all his money on margin.

L. & M. was going at 71 when he went in on the deal, and a few days later it was up to 75.

At the beginning of the following week it was up to 80, and Will watched the market closely so that he might be able to judge when it was best for him to unload.

The boom set in on Wednesday and the brokers became greatly excited as they always did over a boom or a slump.

Finally the price reached 91, and the young messenger gave the bank instructions to sell him out.

His stock went at a little over 91, and after commissions were paid he figured up his profit at \$1,400, which raised his capital to \$2,100.

L. & M. went to 93, and the insiders got rid of their holdings without causing any flurry, and after their support was withdrawn from the stock it gradually went down to 75.

This deal was hardly finished before Will saw a paragraph in one of the Wall Street papers referring to Harlequin Silver Mine.

The truth had come out at last, and when a fuller story was published on the following day, confirming the discovery of one of the richest leads of silver ore in the State of Nevada, considerable excitement was shown on the Curb.

The brokers began making inquiries for the stock, but nobody had any.

Several members of the Curb Exchange started around among the offices to try and find some of it.

They met with no success, but their efforts spread the news that something was doing in the old dead mine.

About two o'clock in the afternoon Broker Jacob Dean, who had sold the 20,00 shares to Will, heard the news of the silver strike.

He had not read the account in the morning paper because his attention had been taken up with other matters.

The broker who told him in a casual way about the discovery at the mine said the news was printed in full in the "Wall Street Argus."

Broker Dean couldn't believe there was anything in the report, but as soon as he got back to his office he looked up the story in the "Argus."

He was nearly paralyzed by what he saw.

"I must get that stock back from the boy before he hears about this news," he said to himself in feverish eagerness. "Just to think of me selling those shares for \$25 on the eve of such a discovery after keeping them all these years in my safe, and having that \$200 loan marked up to profit and loss. That stock will be put back on the lists again, and may be quoted as high as 50 cents a share if the ore vein turns out to be half as valuable as it is reported. I simply must get the stock back at all hazards. Why, that boy would make \$10,000 off a \$25 investment, if he didn't make even more. What a donkey I was to sell it, and I thought I had done pretty well to get \$25 for four apparently worthless certificates."

Mr. Dean put on his hat and hurried in to Mr. Douglas's office.

He looked around for Will, but didn't see him.

"Where's your messenger boy?" he asked the cashier.

"I sent him out on an errand."

"Will you send him in to my office as soon as he returns?"

"I will, Mr. Dean," replied the cashier.

Mr. Trask chuckled as the trader walked out, looking like a man in a great sweat.

Will had showed him the story about the Harlequin Mine printed in that morning's "Argus," and the cashier had duly congratulated the young messenger on his good luck,

which, under the circumstances, promised to be phenomenal.

Will returned to the office in about ten minutes.

"Mr. Dean was in here looking for you," said Mr. Trask.

"That so?" replied Will. "What did he want with me?"

"He didn't say, but I guess he's read about the discovery of ore in the Harlequin Mine and he is trying to get those 20,000 shares back."

"I'm afraid he won't get them back from me."

"Well, he said he wanted to see you in his office as soon as you got back, so you'd better go in there now, for I may have to send you out again in a few minutes."

So Will hastened in to see what Mr. Dean wanted with him.

"Take a seat, Wicker," said Dean. "I want to speak to you about that mining stock I sold you the other day."

"What about it?" asked Will.

"I've just discovered that I had no right to sell it to you."

"No right?"

"No. It was hypothecated with me some time ago as security for a \$200 loan. I thought the loan had run out, but find I made a mistake. I'll have to ask you to return me the certificates. I'll allow you \$25 for your trouble in the matter."

"Do you expect the man to whom you made the loan to come back and claim the stock?"

"I am looking for him to do so."

"Then you believe that dead people can revisit this earth, do you?"

"Dead people! What do you mean?"

"The man you made the loan to has been dead these two years."

"Who told you that?" glared Broker Dean.

"Mr. Trask, our cashier," replied Will coolly.

"Mr. Trask knows nothing about my business," said Mr. Dean angrily.

"Then I'm to understand that the man is not dead?"

"Certainly, he is not."

"I'm afraid in that case you'll have to settle the matter with him yourself. I bought the certificates from you in good faith, and I'm going to hold them."

"But I must have them. I'll give you \$100 if you will release them to me."

"No, sir. I wouldn't take \$1,000 for them in cash, nor \$5,000, at this moment. I have learned that a rich vein of silver has just been discovered in the mine, and the stock may be worth \$10,000 a month from now. I know a good thing when I see it, and I don't propose to let it get away from me."

"You can't keep that stock, young man. I'll call on your employer and he will make you give it up."

"You're at liberty to call on him if you want to, but he can't make me turn my own property over to you."

"If he doesn't I'll have you arrested for retaining property that belongs to another," cried Jacob Dean furiously.

"All right. Have me arrested. I'll bet you won't get the stock back, just the same. I'm willing to submit the case to any magistrate in the city. I bought the stock from you, and it is mine as much as this suit of clothes is mine. You cannot frighten me by such a threat as that. I wasn't born yesterday."

"We'll see, you impertinent little monkey. 'I've offered you \$100 for its return. If it isn't in my office by ten tomorrow morning you will find yourself in the hands of a policeman on your way to jail," roared the broker, who was as mad as a hatter.

Will made no reply to this speech, but got up and left the office.

Fifteen minutes later he met Broker Arden on the street and laid the matter before him.

"The stock is your property beyond any doubt," said Arden. "You were smart to get that receipt for the \$25 from him. That will clinch the matter in any court of law. How came you to buy that stock, anyway?" he added curiously.

"I'll tell you some time, Mr. Arden. At present all I can say is that I came into advance information about the discovery of silver ore in the mine, and I looked around to find some of the stock, for I thought it would be a good thing to have."

"You're an uncommonly lucky boy, Wicker. You may make \$1,000 profit on every dollar you invested in the stock. Everything will depend on the richness of the ore and whether it lasts or not. Should it peter out the stock will return you nothing. On the other hand should this mine prove to be a new Eldorado you will be in a position to make 1,000 per cent. profit, if not more."

"I expect that Mr. Dean will try to make trouble for me."

"Pay no attention to him. He can't do anything in the matter. The sale was a bona fide one and will stand."

Will thanked him and walked off.

Next morning at eleven o'clock, as Will was coming out of the messengers' entrance to the Exchange he was confronted by Broker Dean and a policeman.

They had evidently been waiting for him to come out.

"There he is now," said Dean. "Arrest that boy."

The policeman laid his hand on Will's shoulder, saying:

"You'll have to come with me, young man."

"What for? What am I charged with?"

"You are a thief!" roared Dean, shaking his fist in Will's face. "You have mining stock belonging to me in your possession. You will give it up now or go to jail."

CHAPTER XIII.

NAT PEASELEY MAKES A HAUL IN THE MARKET.

"I haven't anything belonging to you, Mr. Dean. The mining stock you refer to I purchased from you for \$25, as you well know. Because it promises to be worth something now you want to get it away from me. Well, you won't get it. I know my rights, and intend to stand up for them."

"Take him to the station, officer," said the broker in a rage.

"It strikes me that you'll regret having me arrested, Mr. Dean," said Will, as a crowd of messenger boys and others began to gather, attracted by the disturbance and the presence of the policeman.

"What's this mean, Mr. Dean?" demanded Broker Arden, stepping up, suspecting at once the cause of the boy's trouble.

"Mr. Dean has caused my arrest on the charge of retain-

ing that mining stock I told you about yesterday afternoon," explained Will.

"That boy's arrest is an outrage!" ejaculated Edwin Arden, looking angrily at Dean.

"He is a thief!" cried Broker Dean doggedly.

"He is no more a thief than you are yourself," replied Arden, standing up loyally for Will.

"Aha! You wish to insult me!" cried Dean, shaking his fist in the face of the boy's defender.

The young broker knocked his arm aside, sprang at him, and struck him a heavy blow in the mouth, knocking him down.

The messenger boys who formed the inner line of spectators gave a shout of glee.

It looked as if the two brokers were about to indulge in a scrap on the sidewalk, and that was an exhibition that was just to their liking.

They were disappointed, however, as Broker Dean, though a bigger man than Broker Arden, had the heart of a mouse.

Besides, Dean knew that Arden was a boxer and an all-around athlete, and that he stood no show whatever in a scrap with the younger man.

He picked himself up, glared at Arden, but made no belligerent move.

"Officer," said Arden, "have you a warrant for this boy's arrest?"

"I have."

"Will you let me see it, please?"

The policeman exhibited the warrant, which charged Will Wicker with appropriating property, to wit: Four certificates of 5,000 shares each of the Harlequin Silver Mining Company, of Paradise, Nevada, which did not belong to him rightfully.

"This boy bought and paid for that stock, officer, and he holds a receipt from this man Dean for the purchase price of the shares. It is simply ridiculous to arrest him on such a charge," said Arden.

"It is not my place to pass upon the merits of the case," replied the policeman. "I have been sent to execute the warrant."

"If you push this charge, Mr. Dean," said Arden, "it will do you no good, and only serve to make you the laughing-stock of the Street. Wicker bought that stock of you at your own figures. It was absolutely worthless at the time of the sale—not worth the price you charged him. Now you want to get it back because of a newspaper report stating that a rich discovery of ore has been made in the mine. If that stock turns out to be valuable this boy will rightfully be the gainer. If he is taken to the station I will go there and bail him out, and I will see that he afterwards brings a suit against you for false imprisonment."

Dean began to wake up to the fact that he was acting like a fool, so he told the policeman to let Will go.

The policeman, however, entertained some doubts about releasing the boy on account of the warrant, which it was his duty to execute.

Dean then directed him to bring Will over to his office.

When they arrived there he handed the officer a bill.

"Report to the court that the case has been settled," he said, and the policeman went away.

He then offered Will \$500 for the return of the certifi-

ates, but the boy declined to part with them, so that ended the interview.

The fact that Will owned 20,000 shares of the Harlequin Mine reached the ears of his employer, although the boy himself said nothing about the matter to any one but the cashier, and Mr. Trask did not think it necessary to inform Mr. Douglas.

Mr. Arden told Douglas about it, as he thought that the way Will had got possession of the shares was very clever indeed.

Douglas laughed at the story of Broker Dean's discomfiture in his futile effort to regain possession of the stock as soon as he learned that the mine was likely to turn out a winner after all.

When he saw Will he congratulated him about the matter.

"How came you to learn in advance of the printed report that a valuable silver lead had been discovered in the Harlequin Mine?" asked Broker Douglas curiously.

"I'll tell you if you promise to keep it secret, sir."

"I certainly will not say anything about it if you don't wish me to."

Will then told him about the finding of the wallet by Nat Peaseley in the gutter almost in front of the Exchange, and how it contained a \$5 bill and a letter without an envelope from a man in Paradise, Nevada, to a friend of his in New York.

"Here is the letter, sir. You can read it. I started to look for some of the stock on the strength of that. I had no luck until I spoke to Mr. Trask about the mine, and he told me that Broker Dean had 20,000 shares of it in his safe—the very number mentioned in the letter. I lost no time in calling on Mr. Dean, and he seemed glad to get rid of it at most any old price, though he did ask me \$100 for it at first. When I told him that I couldn't afford to pay over \$25 he let me have the four certificates for that."

Mr. Douglas read the letter and handed it back to Will.

"You must have been born lucky, young man. That letter was a valuable tip, and I congratulate you on your sharpness in taking immediate advantage of it. Of course you will hold on to the stock until satisfactory developments in the mine have established a basis on which the value of the stock can be determined."

"Certainly, sir. I believe I've got a good thing and I'm not going to let it get away from me."

"If the ore discovery is anywhere near as good as it has been reported the stock is sure to be re-listed on the Western markets, and will then take its place among the securities dealt in on the Curb here. When that time comes you will then know how much your 20,000 shares are worth."

Mr. Douglas entered his office and Will began to build air castles around his Harlequin mining stock.

A few days later Will was listening to some brokers talking in the reception-room while waiting to get an interview with Mr. Douglas.

He was the only one in the room besides themselves, and as he was apparently absorbed in the columns of the "Daily Argus" they paid no attention to his presence.

He soon learned that they were discussing the chances of big money to be made out of a combination in which they were interested to boom H. & O. stock, which was then going at 56.

Will listened attentively to all they said, and when the four brokers were admitted to Mr. Douglas's sanctum he was satisfied he had got hold of a fine tip.

That afternoon on his way home he left an order at the little bank for the purchase of 200 shares of H. & O. at the market, and his order was filled first thing in the morning after the Exchange opened for business.

Will didn't look for the stock to rise right away, as it would take some days for the syndicate to buy in the shares on the outside before its brokers got busy on the Exchange.

That evening he asked Nat if he wanted to make a little money on the outside.

"By gum! I'm always ready to make money on any side, Will, whether it's on the outside or the inside," he replied.

"As long as it's not the wrong side, eh? Well, have you got \$50?"

"I have."

"Give it to me and I'll buy you five shares of H. & O. stock. I've bought as many shares myself as my pile will let me, and I expect to make a good thing out of it."

"If you expect to make money out of it I'm with you. I don't know nothin' 'bout stocks, but you ought to know a hull lot by this time, and whatever you say goes with me, bet your bottom dollar."

Nat came up with \$50, and next day Will bought five more shares in his own name for his friend's account.

Three days later H. & O. was up to 58, and Will told Nat that he was \$10 better off on paper than he had been at the time he put up the \$50.

"What do you mean by I'm \$10 better off on paper?" asked Nat.

"Well, your five shares of stock are worth \$10 more than when I bought them for you. We call that paper profit, because nobody is certain of it until he realizes the cash in hand."

"I reckon I see the point," said Nat, nodding his head sagely. "How much do you think I'm goin' to make out of this thing?"

"You may make \$15 or \$20 clear."

"Gosh! That's fine. I'd like to be in one of these here deals every day. I'd soon be rich enough to buy a farm for myself."

"Do you intend to go back to the country one of these days and settle down?"

"I ain't quite sure what I'll do. This here \$10 a week I'm gittin' down on Beaver Street is a mighty strong inducement for me to stay in the city for a good while to come."

"You're bound to get a raise by and by if you attend strictly to business. That is an old established house you're with. The boss of a place of that kind always takes care of his employees as long as they do the right thing."

"I don't want no one to take care of me. By gum! I kin take care of myself."

"What I mean is that Mr. Dazian will give you a square deal."

"Oh, that's it. Well, I don't ask for nothin' more."

On Friday of that week H. & O. began to boom in earnest.

At length it reached 75 3-4, at which figure Will sold out his own shares and the five he bought for Nat.

On Tuesday evening when his friend went up to his room with him he handed him \$147.50.

"What's this?" asked Nat, looking at the roll in surprise.

"The \$50 you gave me to put up on H. & O. The rest is your profit."

"B'gosh! You don't mean to say I've made \$97.50?" gasped the country lad.

"That's what you made on the deal."

"Sufferin' gignlamps!" ejaculated Nat, gaping at the money. "I never had so much before in all my life. I'm goin' down to Millbank next Sunday along with you, and by gum! I'll make the gals look some, bet your boots. I'll get a new soot and a new hat and a new tie. I reckon I'll have the hull town by the ears. How much did you make, Will?"

"I made \$3,900."

"B'gosh! You must be worth a hull lot of money now."

"I'm worth \$6,000, and 20,000 shares of mining stock that some day may be worth a dollar or more a share."

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW FORTUNE FAVORS WILL.

When Sunday came around Will and Nat went down to Millbank together.

They were both dressed in their best clothes, but Nat looked something gorgeous in his new suit, with a glass diamond in his four-in-hand tie, and a silk handkerchief sticking out of the upper outside pocket of his coat.

He looked the countryman all over, in spite of his city outfit, while no one would have guessed that Will was anything but a regular New Yorker.

This time Will carried a cane, and Nat carried one also, because he didn't want his friend to have anything on him, as the saying is.

When they got off the car at Millbank Station the agent nearly had a fit when he recognized Nat.

"Well, you're coming out for fair, Nat," he said with a grin.

"By gum! I rather guess there's some style about me now," replied Nat complacently. "Me and Will are the goods, bet your life."

"I'm afraid the girls won't do a thing to you, Nat," laughed the agent.

"I'll bet they won't, b'gosh!"

"Come on, Nat, we've got no time to fool here. We've got to get back to the city some time to-night," said Will, pulling his companion away.

Nat only walked a short distance with Will, as his home lay in another direction, but it was easy to see that his appearance in town was creating a sensation.

What would happen when the old man saw the dudish appearance of his son Will could only surmise, but he judged there would be something doing on the farm.

Will went straight to the hotel, where he was received with open arms by Mr. Crimp and Bessie, and with unusual respect and consideration by Mrs. Crimp.

He had a whole lot to tell them, and when he showed them a certificate of deposit for \$6,000 on the little bank in Nassau Street, made out in his name, the three looked at him with wonder.

"But that isn't all I'm worth," he said. "I own 20,000

shares of mining stock that I picked up at a bargain which I expect will stand me in \$20,000 one of these days. It wasn't worth anything when I bought it, but silver was discovered on the property, and that means I am going to make a good thing out of it."

"And you wasn't worth \$10 when you left here six months ago," said Mr. Crimp.

"That's right, pop. One of these days I hope to be worth as much as Mr. Douglas, or Mr. Arden, or any of the brokers."

"How much are they worth?"

"Anywhere from \$100,000 to half a million or more."

Will brought up the question of Bessie's departure for New York at dinner.

Mrs. Crimp looked glum and said she hated to part with the girl.

"Haven't you found another yet?"

"I can't find no gal that's willin' to come and work for me," she replied.

Will was not surprised at this admission on her part, for he guessed that everybody in Millbank and the neighborhood knew that Mrs. Crimp was not an easy woman to work for.

"Me and Bessie is gettin' on all right nowadays. I wish you'd let her stay awhile longer," said the lady of the house.

"Are you willing to stay, Bessie?" asked Will.

"Do you want me to?" she asked wistfully.

"Well, if Mrs. Crimp is treating you fairly I think you'd better stay for the present. I'll come down often to see you. I'm not stuck on having you go out to work in New York. There's no occasion for you to make money, for I intend to provide for you one of these days when I get well off."

So it was decided that Bessie was to remain at the hotel, much to Mrs. Crimp's satisfaction.

Will made Mr. Crimp a present of \$25 for himself and gave a similar amount to Mrs. Crimp.

He gave Bessie \$50 to expend on herself in any way she chose.

"If you don't find somebody you like better than me, sweetheart," he said, "some day you shall have all the money you can get away with."

"I shall never find anybody I'll like better than you, Will," she said, putting her arms about his neck and laying her head on his shoulder.

"Sure of that, are you?"

"Yes. I love you very dearly."

"And I love you better than anybody in all the wide world," he replied, kissing her.

"Do you, Will? I am so happy."

At seven o'clock Will met Nat at the station.

The country lad looked as if he'd been having the time of his life.

"The old man had a fit when he seen me," grinned Nat.

"I was afraid something would drop on the farm when you got there," laughed Will.

"And mam, she nearly fainted. As for the gals, Sukey and Moll, they jest laughed till the tears ran down their eyes. I tell you they got the fatted calf on the table purty dern quick. I was the hull thing, and they didn't want me to go back. I gave the old man and mam \$10 apiece, and

each of the gals a fiver. They think I own a bank in the city, and I let 'em think so, b'gosh!"

As Nat concluded the train came in and they boarded it.

At the end of the coming week Will saw by the Goldfield market report that the Harlequin mine had been put on the list and was quoted at 40 cents.

"That makes my block of stock worth \$8,000. But I don't intend to sell it at that price," he said to himself.

A week later it was up to 60 cents, and by the end of the month it had gone up to \$1.25 a share.

By degrees it rose to \$1.52, and as it seemed to hang around that figure Will concluded to sell it.

He got rid of it to four different brokers at \$1.50, and thus added \$30,000 to his capital.

It seemed as if good fortune was running Will's way in shoals, for hardly had he disposed of his mining shares before he got hold of a tip on S. & T. that looked like a winner.

He bought 3,000 shares at 65, and a week later it was going at 75.

He also got 15 shares for Nat.

"This is a gilt-edged stock, and the tip is a gilt-edged one, too," he told Nat at the time he proposed that his friend should make his second venture. "I know some of the brokers who are booming it, and they are able to keep it up as long as they please. They're going to make a mint of money out of the rise, and I propose to get a slice out of it myself."

"If I made \$97.50 out of \$50," said Nat, "I ought to make three times as much out of \$150, b'gosh!"

"You probably will if things go right as I expect."

S. & T. continued to rise steadily for several days, and at the end of that time it was up to 85 and a fraction.

Judging by what he heard about the Street that it was time for him to sell he left an order with the bank to do so.

His profit amounted to \$60,000, while Nat captured \$300.

Nat was tickled to death, and he wanted to know how much Will had made out of the deal, but this time the young messenger wouldn't tell him.

"He'd drop dead if he knew I was worth \$96,000," chuckled Will. "He'd be after me all the time to make another deal for him whether I saw a good chance or not, because he'd want to make \$96,000 himself right off the reel."

The possession of nearly \$100,000 didn't seem to make a whole lot of difference with Will Wicker, not half so much, in fact, as the change that \$450 did in Nat.

It was as much as Will could do to hold Nat in.

One would have thought he was a millionaire from his conversation and the style he put on.

Will was now in high favor with Mrs. Crimp, for every time he came down he brought her a nice present, and she reckoned him a kind of walking gold mine.

Mr. Crimp was always sincerely glad to see him without any regard to the present that Will always insisted on his accepting.

As for Bessie, of course she was very happy when he came down to Millbank, for Will was everything to her, as he declared she was to him.

Thus several months passed away and early summer came around

Will had made several quick deals at a profit of three or four points on each, and his capital had increased to a little over \$150,000.

Then the chance came to him to get in on the biggest deal of his young career.

CHAPTER XV.

WILL BUYS SOME TROLLEY SHARES.

One day Will was returning from an errand to the Mills Building.

An old white-haired gentleman was walking right ahead of him.

He was a well-known character in Wall Street and his name was Andrew Hardcastle.

No one knew his exact age, but it was known to be over eighty.

Most men of his wealth, for he was a millionaire, would have retired from active service years since.

Andrew Hardcastle, however, couldn't tear himself away from the financial district.

He had grown up with it from a boy of fifteen, when he entered a big brokerage house as office boy, and graduated from it as a broker himself.

Subsequently he turned his attention to loaning money to brokers at the prevailing rate of interest, and he found this so profitable that he stuck to it.

Every messenger boy as well as habitue of Wall Street knew the old man, and naturally Will recognized his figure as soon as he saw it.

Andrew Hardcastle had an office on the fifth floor of one of the new office buildings, and there he could be found every working day from ten to three.

His bookkeeper was a man almost as old as himself, who had been with him for over forty years, and his stenographer was a little gray-haired lady of perhaps fifty.

Even his office boy and messenger was a little wizened old fellow of sixty-odd, who seemed to be quite as nimble on his pins as most of the boys who filled similar positions.

Will was perhaps a yard behind the old gentleman when something caused him to glance upward.

It might have been a loud warning cry borne down to the sidewalk by the wind which had caught his ear and attention.

However, he never remembered what had caused him to look up.

What he saw, however, caused him to catch his breath, spring forward, seize old Andrew Hardcastle in his young and sinewy arms and swing him off his feet.

Almost at the same instant there was a terrific crash, and a heavy iron girder struck the walk where the old man would have been but for Will's presence of mind.

It went through the concrete sidewalk as though this obstruction were nothing but paper, and continued on into the cellar, and thence through the floor to the sub-cellar of the office building, where it extended beyond the building line, leaving a big gaping hole in the walk, and another below.

Andrew Hardcastle was one of those men whose wits are keen even in old age.

He realized at once the peril he had escaped, and after

gazing blankly at the hole two feet away for a moment he turned to see who it was that had saved his life.

Spectators came running to the spot from all quarters, and great excitement prevailed in the street.

"Young man, I am grateful to you," he said in a steady voice, astonishing under the circumstances, and Will was amazed to find that his handclasp was as firm as though nothing unusual had occurred to stir the old man's feelings to the very depth of his being.

"You are welcome, sir," replied Will rather tremulously, for he was not unmoved himself by the thrilling and terrifying incident, although he had just enacted the part of a hero in saving the old gentleman's life.

A crowd gathered around them in a moment.

"Shall I see you as far as your office, Mr. Hardcastle?" asked Will politely.

"Yes. I shall want to thank you more fully than I can do it here."

The crowd, regarding both with wonder, not unmixed with admiration, opened to let them pass through just as a big policeman came up.

The officer wanted to know a few particulars for his notebook, and was soon jotting down Mr. Hardcastle's name as well as Will's.

Then followed their business addresses and a question or two.

Will and the old man were then permitted to go on their way, while the policeman proceeded to try and find out the cause of the accident.

The young messenger accompanied his aged companion to the Altemus Office Building and upstairs to his office.

Here Mr. Hardcastle had a short talk with the boy, and finally dismissed him with the request that Will must call on his occasionally, and if he could ever be of any assistance to him he must not fail to let him know.

The papers had a full account of the incident, and gave Will Wicker full credit for saving the old gentleman's life.

For the next thirty-six hours Will was the most talked of boy in the city, and his presence of mind and nerve were loudly praised by all the traders.

Then the matter was forgotten in the giddy whirl of Wall Street affairs.

Not long afterward Will learned that a number of capitalists were organizing a pool to buy the stock of a small trolley line which was operating about three miles of road between two towns in Westchester County.

The road owned a 99-year franchise, but it was not paying, nor had it paid since the day it went into commission.

The capitalists, who were only moderately well off men, and not particularly well known in the financial world, intended to enlist the services of certain politicians in a scheme to extend the road to a certain town where connection could be made with a big trolley company, and then sell the combined franchises to the other company at a big price.

It was known that the president of the small road, called the Westchester & Northern Trolley Line, was anxious to sell out his controlling interest, and the capitalists proposed to buy him out, and as much of the rest of the stock as they could pick up at bargain rates.

Will immediately saw the chance to make a good haul by getting in ahead of the pool.

He ascertained that the road was capitalized for \$3,000,000, all of which had been sold at par or \$50 a share, making 60,000 shares of stock that had been issued.

The stock, however, had gone down in value and was quoted at 25.

Will immediately went to the little bank, had a talk with the cashier, and told him that he had \$150,000 that he wanted invested in stock of the W. & N. Trolley Line, on a 10 per cent. margin, and agreeably to Will's request, in an hour from that time the little bank had purchased 15,000 shares of the W. & N. line for an average price of 24, and notified Will by messenger that the stock was held subject to his order.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW WILL WORKED A CORNER.

That afternoon Will called on Andrew Hardcastle at half-past three.

He had sent the old gentleman word that he would be there at that hour, and asked him to wait, as he wanted to see him on a matter of great importance.

After they had greeted each other Will said:

"Would it surprise you to learn that I am worth \$150,000, Mr. Hardcastle?"

"Are you really worth that much?" asked the old gentleman in surprise.

"I was this morning, but I have put it up as margin on 15,000 shares of the W. & N. Trolley Line."

Mr. Hardcastle looked at Will as if he thought he was not in his right mind.

He knew all about the financial condition of the trolley line, and, it happened, he held in his safe at that moment 31,000 shares of the road, the controlling interest of the president of the company, which had been hypothecated by that gentleman three months before to raise his share of the assessment necessary to meet the January interest.

"Will you explain why you bought 15,000 shares of this line on margin?" he asked Will. "I don't believe a speculator in the Street could be found willing to take such a desperate risk. Without knowing your reasons I should term it the rankest kind of folly, for the road is practically insolvent."

"I will tell you the grounds for the deal. I know all about the condition of the road, but I also know something which the Street does not know at present," said Will, who thereupon explained to Mr. Hardcastle about the syndicate that was being formed to take over the road at bedrock prices, secure another franchise extending the line to Williamsport, and sell out to the H. & N. H. interests.

"Efforts have been made by the W. & N. road to extend the road themselves to Williamsport, but it has always been blocked by Senator Smith, because they would not ante up his figure," said Will. "Well, Senator Smith is in this syndicate and the franchise will go through as sure as fate."

Mr. Hardcastle was now much interested in Will's statement of the case, and he was surprised that the boy had been able to secure such valuable inside information.

He was more surprised presently when the young errand boy outlined the object of his visit.

"I have, as I just told you, acquired a grip on a quarter interest in the road's stock. What I want to do is to secure as much of the stock as I can get. I understand that the president of the road has offered his controlling interest for 24. I'd like to get it. Will you buy it for me on the strength of what I told you and divide the profit with me?"

"Before I give you my answer we will go into this matter a little closer. And first of all perhaps you will tell me how you come to be worth \$150,000."

Will accordingly told him how he had been brought up in the country; how he came to New York to accept an offer from Broker Douglas to enter his office as messenger, and how he had started speculating in the market with \$20 on two shares of D. & G. stock in a messenger boys' pool.

Mr. Hardcastle was particularly interested in the way he obtained the 20,000 shares of Harlequin mining stock for \$25, and then realized \$30,000 out of it.

"Upon my word, young man, I believe you're a born speculator," he said. "At any rate you have had extraordinary luck with your speculations. Does Mr. Douglas know what you have been doing, and how much you're worth?"

"All he knows is about the mining stock speculation. He believes I have the \$30,000 I made in that deposited in savings banks."

They then went into a consideration of the trolley road project.

"Your purpose seems to be to effect a corner in that stock," said the old man.

"That's exactly what I am aiming at."

"What then?"

"I intend to call on Senator Smith and make him a special proposition for securing a franchise on a line to Williamsport. I think I can do better by him than the syndicate, provided you will see me through."

Will went into all the details of the scheme as far as he had thought them out, and they struck Mr. Hardcastle so favorably that he consented to back Will with all the money necessary to put the deal through.

"I have Mr. Wynn's controlling interest in the line in my safe now," he told the boy, "and I will send him word at once that I can get him 22 for the whole block. If he is willing to take it I will buy the stock outright for you. That will give you three-quarters of the shares. Tomorrow you can tell Mr. Douglas to buy every share of the road's stock he can get at 24, and deliver it C. O. D. to me. Before the end of the week you ought to have the stock completely cornered, then you can try to put your scheme through."

Two days later Mr. Hardcastle sent his ancient messenger to Will with a note telling him that he had bought the president's interest in the trolley line at 22.

By Saturday Will had secured control of 55,000 of the 60,000 shares of stock, and had worked a corner that put the destiny of the trolley road in his hands.

When the syndicate got busy the members of it found that their plans were completely blocked.

Will then had an interview with Senator Smith at Mr. Hardcastle's office, in which the old man took part, and showed the senator how it would be to his interest to drop out of the useless syndicate and come in with young Wicker.

An agreement was drawn up with the senator, and the

big politician immediately set the wires going to get the new franchise through the Legislature.

As soon as this was effected Mr. Hardcastle communicated with the H. & N. H. people and made them an offer of the W. & N. trolley line and the franchise to Williamsport.

It was some time before an agreement could be reached, but finally the H. & N. H. road agreed to buy the 55,000 shares of stock from Will for 40, or \$2,200,000.

That left \$880,000 over and above what Will had paid for the stock.

Will got \$500,000, Senator Smith got \$250,000, and the balance went for the expenses and interest on the money advanced by Mr. Hardcastle and the bank, the old gentleman refusing to share in the profits.

Will then tendered his resignation to Mr. Douglas, on the ground that an errand boy worth \$650,000 was out of place in his office.

"What are you going to do, Will?" asked his employer.

"I'm going into partnership with Mr. Arden."

"He never said a word to me about such a thing."

"I know it. We wanted to surprise you."

"You've done it, all right. Well, I wish you luck."

A few days later the sign on Mr. Arden's office was changed to "Arden & Wicker, Stock Brokers," and the news created a big sensation when it reached Millbank.

When Will next visited the village he was received with great deference, and the inhabitants regarded him with pride and satisfaction.

They looked upon him as a self-made product of the little town, and were never tired of talking about his wonderful success in Wall Street.

Some years later there was a big wedding at the hotel, when Will was married to Bessie.

It was an event that the people never could forget, for it was the most important affair that had ever happened in Millbank.

Nat Peaseley was master of the ceremonies, and what he didn't do on that momentous occasion isn't worth mentioning.

To-day Will is the managing partner of Arden & Wicker. He lives with Bessie and their three children in a magnificent residence on West End Avenue, New York.

Old man Andrew Hardcastle is still alive in the nineties, but he's out of Wall Street at last.

Will often calls on him, and the old gentleman is never tired of telling his friends about the smart errand boy who worked a corner.

THE END.

Read "AFTER THE BIG BLUE STONE; OR, THE TREASURE OF THE JUNGLE," which will be the next number (151) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

A handy boy will become a handy man and save himself many a dollar every year.

The Lehigh Valley Coal Company, of Hazleton, Pa., has opened what is believed to be the largest stripping in the world, at Lattimer. The coal is in a solid bed 1,300 feet wide, 30 feet in thickness, and extends from Lattimer to Drifton, at least six miles. It is estimated that were the company to take 500 tons daily, it would require 250 years to exhaust the supply.

The work for restraining the Colorado River and protecting the Imperial Valley is finally finished, and a report has been made by General Manager Cory to the California Development Company. The Southern Pacific Company has spent \$1,500,000 on this work, which could only have been accomplished by a large company with large resources in money, men and equipment.

The blue-grass region of Kentucky and Tennessee was the first national park and game forest preserve in America. It was so set apart before the white man had come with profaning foot and conquering firearms by the great Iroquois tribes of Indians—the Six Nations. They forbade any settlement or agriculture in all that great region, and it became known as the "hunting grounds."

More than \$1,000,000 in Confederate currency and about \$4,000 in gold coin and bullion were unearthed by the prong of a plow on Bret Knox's farm, in Kentucky, by the planter, who had just taken the reins of the mule in hand in an effort to show a negro hand how to "ditch" a trough intended to carry the accumulation of water from the plot of ground in cultivation. The treasure is believed to have originally belonged to Samuel H. Thompson, whose father was prominent in the Confederate cause during the Civil War, but, as there are no heirs, Knox will retain possession until a claim is made. The Confederate bills were mostly of \$5, \$10 and \$20 denominations, and were so mildewed from age that they fell to fragments when handled.

One of the most necessary woods for special purposes is hickory, and there is so much concern over the depleted supply of this invaluable timber that an organization called the National Hickory Association has been formed. The association has appealed to the Forest Service to take up the commercial study of hickory trees. Without hickory trees it will be necessary to find some other material for buggy wheels, buggy shafts and whiffletrees, axe, pick and hammer handles, and several other articles. To find a substitute would be a mighty difficult matter, and the Forest Service promises to

look into the situation with a view of encouraging the conservation of the present supply of hickory and promoting the growth of the trees by planting or otherwise.

The press gallery of the Berlin Reichstag has won a signal victory over the Deputies who abused them, and have at last consented to resume their duties again, after an abject apology from the principal offender. During a recent debate there was a burst of mirth from the reporters owing to a certain remark, whereupon Herr Groeber called them a name which was far from complimentary. They showed their resentment by leaving the chamber in a body, and sent in a note to the President, Count Stolberg, demanding a public apology from Herr Groeber. The latter, however, gave a blank refusal, and for several days serious business in the Reichstag was at a standstill. Ministers and private members felt disinclined to allow their words of wisdom to be confined to the four walls of the chamber. On Monday Prince Buelow made a speech on the German foreign policy, but not a word appeared in any home paper except the "Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung," a semi-official organ. The result was that extraordinary pressure was brought to bear on Herr Groeber from high quarters, and he made an ample apology for the insult he leveled at the press gallery, as a consequence of which the reporters decided to resume work.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Among the Quakers," said Miss Wise, "I believe the men wear their hats in church." "How ridiculous!" exclaimed Miss Gidday. "As if any one could possibly be interested in men's hats!"

Jaggles—Do you think there will ever be any radical change in the style of men's hats? Waggles—Not unless somebody invents a hat that will cover the bald spot on the back of the head.

"Hey, boy! Where's your brother?" "In the barn, shoein' horses." "Where's your mother?" "In the back yard, shooin' chickens." "Where's your father?" "In the hammock, shooin' flies."

De Lush—McSosh told Dr. Weise that he experienced great difficulty in walking, and asked him what he could take. Von Stoo—What did the doctor advise—water? De Lush—No—a hansom.

"George, I saw that Singleton woman to-day carrying the silk umbrella that she borrowed from me at the club card party." "Why didn't you ask her for it?" "I was just going to, when I remembered that I borrowed it from Mrs. Trumper."

"Common politeness should teach men to give up their seats to a lady at all times." "Oh, I don't know. How about the man who paid \$60,000 for his seat on the New York Stock Exchange? I guess he wouldn't give it up to a lady in a hurry."

"Billy Green's nothing but a coward." "Is he?" "Yep. I called him a coward right to his face, I did, an' he didn't dast say nothin'." "Then he is a coward." "You bet he is. An' the next time I call him a coward I'll say it right out loud so's he can hear it."

A little girl was being put to bed one summer night, and after she had said her prayers her mother kissed her good-night, and said: "Now go to sleep, dear. Don't be afraid, for God's angels are watching over you." In a short time, while the mother and father were at tea, a small voice from upstairs was heard "Mamma!" "Yes, little one. What is it?" "God's angels are buzzing around, and one's bitten me!"

WHY I SUSPECTED HER

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

It is some years since I one day received a call to go to a town on the Hudson River that shall be nameless, nor shall I describe it, further than to say that it is a favorite place of residence for many wealthy men doing business in the city of New York.

The dispatch that took me to the depot in such a hurry bore the signature of Hiram Hardwick, a gentleman whom I knew well, and who had engaged me on several cases, and who had always treated me in the best possible manner.

Hence it was a source of satisfaction to be now hurrying to his assistance in response to a request reading:

"It is in your power to do me a great personal favor. I beg of you hasten to my residence here."

I little dreamed, however, of the nature of the assistance that Mr. Hardwick desired at my hands.

On leaving the depot I started to walk to his house. I had been there before, and knew of a short cut across the fields by which I could reach it more quickly than an ordinary hack would convey me there by the longer carriage road around.

I had some minutes before caught sight of the turreted gables of his stylish residence, when I realized that I had strayed from the path, and was lost. This was something not calculated to cause me any apprehension, for I was, at the worst, only a short distance from the house, and would not be compelled to more than cross a field or two.

While thus thinking I suddenly came upon a scene that caused my heart to stop beating.

There, in an opening where the underbrush grew less thick than at other near points, I saw the motionless figure of a man outstretched. He was dead. I knew that the very instant my eyes rested on him. But I knelt, nevertheless, and assured myself of the fact.

While kneeling there beside the body I made another discovery.

This murdered man was Philip Hardwick, son of Hiram Hardwick, who had sent for me.

It flashed across my mind then why the old gentleman had sent for me in such a hurry. It had something to do with his son, lying cold in death here in the woods, in sight of his own home, yet a spot as desolate almost as though in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.

With grave face I passed on presently. I had no fear of leaving the body there alone, for it had been hours since life had fled, and it had not been molested. Hence it was fair to assume that it would not be for the short time I calculated I should be absent.

Mr. Hardwick met me at the door.

"I am very glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "I am very much distressed over an occurrence that I cannot explain. Perhaps my fears may be foolish, and if they are I trust that you will do me the favor never to repeat that I sent for you."

"You may depend on me, sir. Now what is this strange occurrence of which you speak?"

"My son, Philip—he is such a careful and thoughtful son, and he never absented himself from home before without giving me some word—he went from here night before last, after supper, and has not since returned, nor have I heard a word from him. My heart misgives me. I want you to find him for me."

How could I tell that fond old man that I had but this minute come from beside the body of that murdered son? It was utterly impossible for me to do so, and hastily drawing to a finish, I took my departure, promising that I would shortly report to him, and saying to myself:

"I must leave it to others to break the news. I will go to the town and send the coroner to take charge of the body."

I had not yet succeeded in finding this individual when I was abruptly halted by a young and handsome lady.

"They tell me you are a detective," she cried. "If you are, I want you to find Philip Hardwick for me."

"Philip Hardwick! The mention of the name caused me to glance quickly and keenly at her.

"Pardon me," I said, pointedly, "but what may Philip Hardwick have been to you?"

She looked confused, turned her eyes down, and lowly answered:

"He—he was—was—a very dear friend."

"And why are you concerned about him?"

"Because—because—he had promised to call on me last evening, and failed to do so. He had never broken his word with me at any time before, and when I heard to-day that his father was worried over his absence, and that he had not been seen in some hours, I—I—thought something dreadful must have happened."

I inwardly called myself a brute for thinking that this girl was a coquette. Yet that was the way her words impressed me. I could not feel that they were prompted by an unselfish love for the subject of the conversation, whose dead white face was constantly before my mental eye.

It was an impulse, a strange and unaccountable whim, that led me to suddenly say:

"Come with me. I would like to take a walk through the fields while I ask you some questions of Philip Hardwick, about whose disappearance I must confess there is a mystery."

The mystery I hinted at would have forced her to accompany me even had there been no stronger motive.

As we went out of the village I let her talk as she would, on my own part uttering no word save to lead her on.

Inwardly I commented:

"She rattles on at a great rate for a person who at first professed to be profoundly distressed over the disappearance of a lover. She is heartless, of that I am certain, and it remains to be seen if there is anything back of that."

It appeared to me that frequently when she came to a halt she groped mentally for words to continue. In other words, her conversation was forced, yet did not appear to me to be forced in that manner which might be expected from one who is trying to rise superior to a great sorrow.

I saw from the movements of her eyes that she was conscious of our vicinity, and that we were approaching the home of Philip Hardwick; but she made no comment thereon, as I expected she would.

At last we were close to the spot.

I drew her attention in another direction until her feet had almost touched the body of the murdered man. Then, facing her in its direction, I cried:

"Just see there!"

She glanced down at the pallid face, and a great change came over her own. But it was not horror nor anguish that was written on it. It was rather a deep surprise, such as might be experienced at having a clever trick played upon one.

And it was due to the expression of her face in that transient space of time that I suspected her.

Suspected her of what?

I hardly could have said myself of what I suspected her, further than that I believed her profession of love for Philip Hardwick was a sham.

An instant, and then falling on her knees beside the corpse, she bent her face down, spoke to him, called his name, then clasping her hands above her head, turned a drawn, hard face toward me and cried:

"Joe Raymond did this!"

And then she hid her face in her hands and began to sob convulsively.

I lifted her, supported her from the horrid spot, and must confess to a feeling of pity until it forced itself on me that her sobs were too hard, too dry, too acrobatic, if I may so express it.

"Do not grieve so, little lady," I said, mustering a kindly tone for the occasion. "Quiet these sobs. Remember you will soon be in the village. And now tell me who is Joe Raymond?"

She was busy with a dainty lace kerchief for a moment, and then turning to me a face that was far from being tear-stained, she responded:

"He—he was a sort of rival of—of—Mr. Hardwick."

"A rival?"

"Yes."

"In what?"

"For—for my favors," she hesitatingly, coyly said. "Mr. Hardwick was inclined to be jealous, and I couldn't help teasing him a little, and—and—it made hard feelings between them."

Having seen the lady to her boarding place—she was a comparative stranger in town, I learned—I sought out the coroner and sent him to take charge of the body, then went in quest of Joe Raymond.

I was not long in finding him—a well-formed, pleasant-faced man of nearly thirty—at sight of whom I told myself that he could not be the murderer.

"Are you Joseph Raymond?" I inquired.

"I am."

"Did you know Philip Hardwick?"

"I did."

"Well, he has been murdered, and suspicion is directed against you. It seems that you were both paying attention to a young lady, and that the rivalry produced some hard feeling."

"There was no rivalry worthy of the name," was the prompt response. "As a matter of fact, both were amusing ourselves by paying attention to a lively and bright young lady who came into town, but I am sure that Phil would no more have married her than I would."

I gave him a quick glance.

"Was her reputation shady?" I inquired.

"I would not wish to say that," was the rejoinder, "but she chose to envelop herself and her antecedents in a mystery that augured no good of her. So it is absurd——"

I interrupted him just there.

"Who is that man yonder? Can you tell me?" indicating an individual whom I had noticed before dogging my footsteps, and who was watching with keenest interest the conversation between Raymond and myself.

"That? Oh, that is my cousin."

"Your cousin?"

"Yes."

"Hem! Well, I must ask you to consider yourself under arrest for the present. It is only nominal, but until something further develops I must keep you in custody."

"Very well," he answered, without hesitation. "There is no disgrace in an arrest—the disgrace comes in the charge being proved, and that it will not be in this instance."

The name of Raymond's cousin was Peroy, and his face struck me as being familiar. But I could not say where or when I had seen it.

"Does he live here?" I inquired.

"No. He only came up from New York recently. I have never liked the fellow, perhaps because"—with a laugh—"I give him credit of a desire to see me placed under ground."

"Why should he desire that?"

"Money. If I should die without heirs he would inherit the estate that came to me conditionally."

My eyes opened a trifle, but I made no comments.

Less than an hour later I was talking with Peroy, commiserating with him over Raymond's unpleasant position.

"He has got himself into a pretty bad box," he rejoined.

"I am sorry for him, for he is a first-rate fellow, barring a little hotheadedness. I have seen him——"

Something dropped through the bottom of a defective pocket and struck the ground at our feet.

It was a photograph. It fell face upward, and before he could pick it up I caught a glimpse of it. The picture comprised a little group of three—a man, a woman, and a baby.

He was the man, and Minnie Gay, as she called herself, was the woman.

Click! click!

"Mr. Peroy, you are my prisoner!"

The handcuffs were on his wrists even as I made the announcement.

Despite his protestations I conveyed him to the jail, and inside of half an hour Minnie Gay was also an inmate in the guise of a prisoner.

The woman soon broke down, yet stubbornly refused to admit a knowledge of the dark crime.

"See here," I argumentatively said, "I can gather the evidence to send both you and Peroy to the gallows, but am willing to afford you an opportunity to turn State's evidence. I am well informed of the nature of the crime. You are Peroy's wife, or worse, and came here to help him steal a fortune. You coquetted with Hardwick and Raymond to breed ill feeling between them, and to cast the murder of one on the other. It was intended that Hardwick should be accused of the murder of Raymond, but in an unforeseen exigency Peroy was forced to murder Hardwick. It was not what you had planned for, but if Raymond could be sent to the gallows Peroy would inherit the estate now in the possession of that gentleman. You see, I am familiar with the points. Now tell me all or not, as you please."

The woman made a clean breast of it then.

It had been the intention to murder Raymond and cast the burden of the crime on Hardwick. But Hardwick had come upon them at the spot where I found his body, and had overheard enough of what passed to comprehend the villainous plot afoot. The instant Peroy saw Hardwick there he snatched out a revolver and shot him down. Then separating, the guilty couple had hastened to the village, there to await events.

It was impossible to do or say anything to assuage the sorrow of Mr. Hardwick over the loss of his son, and I returned to the city that night. A few months later Peroy was hung for the crime and Minnie Gay went to prison for life.

Being credibly informed the other day by a queer old man of the persuasion that the southeast monsoon was still fighting the northeast monsoon to see which would conquer, and the information being followed by a dissertation on the failure of the last sea sports owing to the same perversity of a veteran lagging superfluous on the stage when he ought to have left the boards empty for the keen nor'easter, it occurred to me that there was a considerable amount of information to be obtained about winds without discoursing on windiness. Until one actually experiences it there is a lot of romance hanging around the outskirts of the word monsoon. We speak of the monsoon being late or early, of the east coast being practically closed, but unless we go down to the sea in ships the wind affects us but little. In the great continents of India and Australia, however, the breaking of the rains is a matter of real moment, of general interest to every one, of painful and keenest anxiety to many, and in such cases the word is fraught with a meaning which is greater than ever book conveyed to the minds of man. Apart from the winds of regular habit there are the many local winds which occur in different parts of the world and are generally unkind in character. Of such may be mentioned the Simoon, Sirocco, Harmattan, the Puna of Peru, the bitter nor'easter of Britain, the Mistral of Marseilles and that coast, the Pampero of the Andes. With all these local breezes, though in fact they are oftentimes gales of some velocity, many curious effects are coupled, and one of the most noticeable of these is that the blowing of the genuine nor'easter at home is always coincident with the greatest number of deaths from consumption and brain disease. There is here opened up a wide field of most interesting research for the curious in weather study and humanity lore, for the effect of wind on sentient beings has never been as deeply considered as it might be. Thus in the lower planes of life the animals are distinctly affected by winds, and in particular cats, as any one will remember if they consider the peculiarities of cats when high winds are blowing. Cattle, too, are susceptible to winds, and possibly more to the premonition of wind, while the blowing of a nor'wester will exhilarate some temperaments in a manner not quite the same as anything else will.

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